KESSLER FOUNDATION/NOD
SURVEY OF EMPLOYMENT OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Kessler Foundation/National Organization on Disability

2010 Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities

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Overview

The Kessler Foundation/National Organization on Disability 2010 Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities marks the third effort by Harris Interactive since 1986 to determine the current attitudes of corporate employers toward employees with disabilities. On the twentieth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, this new research also serves to evaluate in a limited fashion, the impact of the ADA on U.S. business.

Data released in July 2010 from an earlier study sponsored by *The Kessler Foundation* and *The National Organization on Disability* found that little progress has been made in closing the employment gap between people with and without disabilities since the passage of the ADA into law[1]. The *2010 Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities* provides additional insight into the employment environment for people with disabilities from the employer's perspective and may help to answer some questions about why such a large gap still exists.

Overall, the findings indicate that the environment for hiring people with disabilities needs a great deal of improvement. Although corporations recognize that hiring employees with disabilities is important and, for the most part, do not perceive the costs of hiring people with disabilities to be prohibitive, most are not hiring many people with disabilities and few are proactively making efforts to improve the employment environment for them.

The survey was conducted by telephone and online in April 2010 among 411 human resource managers and senior executives at companies with over 50 employees.

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[1] The Kessler Foundation/NOD 2010 Survey of Americans with Disabilities found that in 2010, 21% of people with disabilities are employed full or part-time versus 59% of people without disabilities – a gap of 38 percentage points. The gap was 50 points in 1998, 49 points in 2000 and 43 points in 2004. For more information, visit: www.2010DisabilitySurveys.org

Highlights of the *2010 Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities* show that:

Broadly, companies are thinking about <u>diversity</u> and incorporating aspects of diversity hiring into their corporate policies.

- A majority (70%) of corporations have a diversity policy or program. Six in ten (59%) have a policy while a third (33%) report having a program. Just a quarter (23%) of companies have both.
- Diversity programs are comprehensive for those companies who have them. Most employers report that their diversity programs include a variety of aspects of the employment process from recruiting (95%) and hiring/integrating new hires into the company (87%) to retention (66%) and promoting (73%).
    - Two-thirds of these diversity programs include disability. After race (80%) and ethnicity (79%), disability (67%) is tied with gender as the next most common group included in diversity programs.
- One-third (33%) of companies have a person dedicated to working on diversity issues, with large companies being much more likely to employ a dedicated person (66%).
- Just over two in five (44%) companies say they are actively recruiting diverse populations. However, those who have a diversity program are much more likely to be actively recruiting diverse populations (67%) than companies with only a policy (51%) or neither (9%).
- Diversity affinity groups are largely an offering of big corporations (47% of larger companies vs. 19% total). These groups are primarily used for networking (79%), social interacting (76%) and mentoring (76%).

Disability is on the radar for some companies but not to the extent that diversity is.

- Disability policies and programs are a lot less common than diversity policies and programs. Three in ten (29%) report having a disability policy or program, with 25% having a policy and only 12% having a disability program. Just 8% of companies have both.

    - Large companies (20%) are twice as likely as small (10%) and medium (11%) companies to have a disability program. One in five (19%) companies has a specific person or department that oversees the hiring of people with disabilities.

- A similar number (18%) offer an education program to help employees learn to work with people with disabilities.

- Only 7% of companies with disability programs offer a disability affinity group.

A majority of companies have hired people with disabilities over the past three years but, overall, people with disabilities make up a small percentage of most workforces.

- Around six in ten (56%) employers have hired someone with a disability in the past three years; a quarter of companies have not and another 19% are not sure.

    - Large (74%) and medium (68%) companies are much more likely than small companies (43%) to have hired people with disabilities in the past three years. A third (34%) of companies report regularly tracking the number of people with disabilities they employ, and again, large companies are more likely to do so (45%).

- Accordingly, a large number of managers (43%) do not know what percentage of their workforce has a disability, but of those who estimated, the average was only 3%.

- Similarly, of the 56% of managers and executives who estimated what percentage of new hires in the past three years was people with disabilities, the average was 2%.

Companies with disability programs report that the programs are inclusive of all aspects of the employment process. Most employers do not perceive their program to be particularly effective but subsequent survey findings suggest otherwise.

- Disability programs are primarily concerned with creating or improving the reasonable accommodation process (81%) or offering disability awareness training (63%). Half (49%) say their disability program incorporates some form of active recruitment of people with disabilities.

- Although most corporate managers (54%) say their disability programs are only somewhat or not at all effective at recruiting, hiring and retaining people with disabilities, other survey findings suggest the programs may be more effective than they think. Companies with disability programs are significantly more likely to have hired someone with a disability in the past 3 years (68% vs. 55% with only a policy and 41% with neither).

Employers mainly use referrals to find employees with disabilities and are not using service provider agencies to their full capacity. However, results indicate that if employers better understood the benefits provided by these agencies – namely, help finding qualified candidates – companies might find them much more useful.

- The most common way companies recruit people with disabilities is through referrals (employee referrals, 70% and friends/word-of-mouth, 62%) and online job boards (58%). However, a significant number of managers also report using service provider agencies. Forty percent (and 53% of HR managers only) report using non-profit or community-based service provider agencies, while 39% (and 50% of HR managers only) say they recruit people with disabilities through state or federal providers, such as Vocational Rehabilitation.

- Only one third (34%) of employers rate the service provider agencies as effective though.

- Half (48%) of the companies who don't use service providers say they don't need the services they offer, yet the main barrier to hiring people with disabilities, after an absence of job openings (69%), is not being able to find qualified candidates with disabilities. Two-thirds (66%) say a *lack of qualified candidates* is a major or minor reason why they haven't hired more people with disabilities in the past three years and 39% say they are *not sure how to find qualified candidates.*

- Further, almost two-thirds (63%) of corporations name *assistance finding qualified candidates with disabilities* as one of the top two most helpful services offered by the agencies. Job sculpting (that is, matching job descriptions to a specific set of skills) was the second most helpful (53%).

Most companies do not report an increased cost associated with hiring a person with a disability.

- A majority of employers perceive the costs of hiring a person with a disability to be the same as hiring a person without a disability. Three in five (62%) think the costs are the same, 35% say they are more expensive and 2% perceive them to be less expensive.

- Most employers report that employees with disabilities use flexible workplace arrangements to the same extent as employees without disabilities. Approximately half (47%), say the usage is the same, 14% say employees with disabilities use them more, 4% say less, and a third (34%) are not sure.

     - Of the benefits and arrangements offered by companies, employers perceive employees with disabilities to use flextime scheduling (32%) and consultation and equipment for ergonomically designed workstations (22%) the most. A third are unsure which arrangements are used most by employees with disabilities.

Majorities also indicate that employees with disabilities have the same abilities and workplace behaviors as employees without disabilities.

- Most employers say employees with disabilities have the same ability to acquire new skills (81%), absenteeism (71%), flexibility to adapt to new situations (67%), dedication (62%), and turnover (58%) as employees without disabilities. Interestingly, one third think employees with disabilities have more dedication (35%) and less turnover (33%).

Twenty years after the passage of the ADA, the survey suggests that corporations seem largely indifferent about the impact that the ADA has had on their company. They also perceive the ADA to be relatively ineffective at equalizing employment opportunities.

- A large majority of corporations (80%) report that the ADA and other disability laws and regulations have neither helped nor hurt their company. Slightly more (10%) report that the ADA helped their company as opposed to hurt it (5%), and 5% report not being familiar with the ADA.

  - The larger a company is, the more likely they are to say the ADA has helped them (small: 4% helped somewhat or significantly; medium: 14%; large: 21%).

- Two in five (41%) say the ADA has been effective at equalizing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, while half (50%) say it has been only somewhat or not at all effective.

Taking into consideration that disability issues are defined differently than they were fifteen years ago, the survey suggests that there has been no improvement in the employment environment for people with disabilities since 1995.

- Fewer companies today have either a disability policy or program compared to 1995 (66% in 1995 down to 29% in 2010).

- One in five (19%) companies has a specific person or department that oversees the hiring of people with disabilities. This is in contrast to 1995 when 40% of companies hired someone specifically for this reason.

- A similar number (18%) offer an education program to help employees learn to work with people with disabilities, which is lower than 1995 when 63% of companies were offering such a program.

- In 1995, almost two-thirds (64% in 1995) of employers reported having hired someone with a disability in the past three years compared to 56% in 2010.