

Executive Summary

Synopsis. The key finding of the 2015 Kessler Foundation National Employment and Disability Survey is that Americans with disabilities are striving to work. They are working, actively preparing for employment, searching for jobs, seeking more hours, and successfully overcoming barriers in the workplace.

Reframing the Dialogue, Shaping the Future

Not Working → Striving to Work

Facing Barriers → Overcoming Barriers

Objective. The Kessler Foundation Employment Survey was designed as a nationally representative, scientifically rigorous, and transparent means of exploring the experiences of Americans with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment.

The Kessler Foundation Employment Survey, conducted by the University of New Hampshire (UNH):

- refocuses the national discourse on employment and disability toward striving to work and overcoming barriers;
- informs the creation of new priorities and programs that address the job search and workplace experiences of people with disabilities; and
- may influence the future of employment for Americans with disabilities.

The Kessler Foundation Employment Survey includes information collected from six subpopulations categorized by their work-related experiences:



Striving to Work. People with disabilities are striving to work, as indicated by the 68.4 percent who are currently working, or looking for work, or have worked since the onset of disability. The fact that people with disabilities are striving to work is demonstrated by other findings. Those who are currently employed are working an average

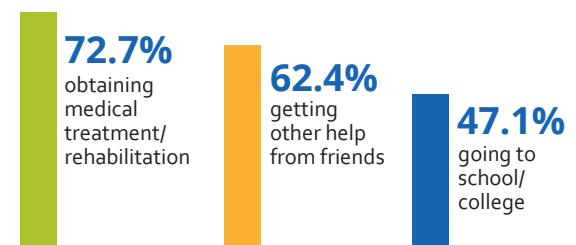


35.5
hours per week

40.6%
want to work more hours

60.7%
work more than 40 hours per week

Preparing for Work. People with disabilities are actively preparing for employment—another indicator that they are striving for work. Among non-working job seekers, the top three activities used to prepare for work are:



Overcoming Barriers—Job Search. People with disabilities are overcoming barriers when looking for jobs. Non-working job seekers were asked about their experience with barriers in the job search process. The top three barriers they faced are:



41.1 percent report not enough education or training, with 38.5 percent of these individuals overcoming this barrier,

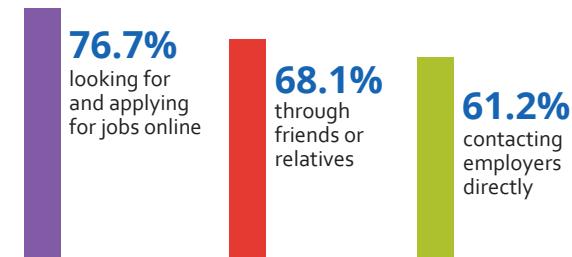


36.0 percent report employers assuming they can't do the job, with 32.8 percent of these individuals overcoming this barrier, and



25.6 percent report a lack of transportation, with 41.9 of these individuals overcoming this barrier.

Searching for Jobs. People with disabilities are actively searching for jobs, yet another way they are striving for work. Among non-working job seekers, the top three approaches used to search for work are:



Overcoming Barriers—In the Workplace. Current workers were asked about their experience with barriers in the workplace. The top three barriers they are faced are:

16.5%

getting less pay than others in a similar job, with 38.6 percent of these individuals overcoming this barrier,

15.7%

attitudes on the part of their supervisor, with 41.3 percent of these individuals overcoming this barrier, and

15.5%

attitudes on the part of their coworkers, with 54.5 percent of these individuals overcoming this barrier.

The workplace barrier most likely to be overcome is family members discouraging them from working, with 6.5 percent reporting this barrier, and 64.3 percent of these individuals overcoming it. The barrier least likely to be overcome is lack of job counseling, with 5.5 percent reporting this barrier, and 33.3 percent of these individuals reporting that they overcame it.

Workplace Accommodations. The provision of workplace accommodations is not just a central tenet of the Americans with Disabilities Act, it is an important facet of corporate America's efforts to attract and keep exceptional and talented employees. Among current workers, the top three accommodations are:

28.4% flexible schedules (flexible start and end times, work at home, taking more breaks),

14.0% modified job duties (reduced hours, light duty, less demanding job tasks), and

13.6% building accessibility being addressed.

These findings support the current trends in workplace culture, where flexible work arrangements are valued by all employees. Organizational policies that allow flexible work arrangements and modified job duties have tremendous potential in supporting persons with disabilities in the workplace.



Scan to take the survey online!

Methods. The Kessler Foundation Employment Survey was conducted using standard, replicable survey practices. A telephone survey was conducted across the United States of randomly selected adults ages 18 to 64 with a self-reported disability. A sample of households was selected using a random digit dialing (RDD) procedure on both landline and cellular telephones. A set of disability questions, based in part on the American Community Survey disability items, and an age question, were used to identify households with at least one adult with a disability aged 18 to 64. Interviews were completed with 3,013 persons. The response rate was 13 percent. Interviews were conducted from October 17, 2014 through April 23, 2015, by the UNH Survey Center and Penn State University Survey Research Center.

Closing Comments. This Executive Summary contains only the major findings of the 2015 Kessler Foundation Employment & Disability Survey. The full report, available at KesslerFoundation.org, contains many more powerful and insightful statistics and analyses. Many more analyses are planned for these data. In the coming years, a de-identified person-level data file and corresponding codebook will be released to the public. All are also invited to use the survey instrument and even take the survey online at www.ResearchOnDisability.org/KesslerSurvey. Please let us know if you find this survey to be useful in your work.



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