



# Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities

## SUMMARY

In 2016, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to fund contractor Westat to conduct the *Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities*. The survey, administered in 2018, collected information from employers about organizational policies, practices, successes, and challenges, as well as attitudes and beliefs regarding the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities. The 2,023 survey respondents represent businesses across the United States. Researchers compared findings from this 2018 survey to results of a 2008 Department of Labor survey on the same topic.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the annual process to determine the Department's research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [worker protection](#) and [disability and employment](#) programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Employers have made progress in the last decade, but people with disabilities still comprise a small percentage of companies' workforces.** The percentage of companies that reported employing people with disabilities increased significantly from 18.4% in 2008 to 22.7% in 2018. The increases occurred among medium and large companies (over 50 employees) with no change for small companies.
- **The percentage of companies recruiting and hiring people with disabilities increased, but most companies in 2018 were not actively recruiting people with disabilities.** In 2008, 13.5% of companies were actively recruiting and hiring people with disabilities, while 17.5% reported the same in 2018. Between 2008 and 2018, companies that reported hiring a person with a disability within the past 12 months increased from 8.5% to 13.5%. Increases in recruitment and hiring were confined to medium and large companies (over 50 employees), with no change among small companies.
- **Employers perceive benefits to hiring people with disabilities, but also have concerns that limit active recruiting and hiring of people with disabilities.** The most commonly cited benefits included projecting a positive image of a company to customers (72.5% of respondents) and to prospective employees (72.0%), as well as increasing the pool of qualified candidates (60.8%). Despite this, 87% expressed one or more concerns about hiring people with disabilities, the most common being the safety of people with disabilities and their coworkers (59.4%), the ability of people with disabilities to perform job





# Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities

duties (55.5%), and absenteeism (51.7%). Employers who expressed concerns were less likely to recruit or hire people with disabilities.

- **Small companies reported more concerns related to cost and work performance than medium-sized and large companies.** Across industries, the goods-producing sector reported more concerns than the service-providing or public administration sectors.
- **Most companies reported implementing three inclusive recruitment and hiring practices, but two of these were not found to be significantly related to hiring, retaining, and promoting people with disabilities.** The majority of companies reported offering accessible interview locations (91.6%), allowing requests for interview accommodations (80.5%), and posting job announcements displaying a non-discrimination/equal opportunity policy (74.0%). Of these, only offering accessible interview locations was significantly associated with employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Four additional effective practices, such as creating an accessible application process and developing measurable goals for hiring people with disabilities, were implemented by less than 30% of respondents.
- **Federal contractors were more likely than other companies to implement inclusive practices, but these practices are not universal.** A set of 2013 changes to the Rehabilitation Act required federal contractors to take affirmative action to hire people with disabilities and to collect data to monitor the effectiveness of outreach and recruitment efforts. Despite this, more than half of federal contractors reported that less than 5 percent of their workforces consisted of people with disabilities.
- **Companies had more policies to retain than hire people with disabilities,** with 82.9% offering flexible workplace programs and/or a process to disclose a disability voluntarily and confidentially. Only 28.6% articulated measurable goals for retaining or advancing people with disabilities.

[SEE THE FULL STUDY](#)

**TIMEFRAME:** 2016-2020

**PARTNER AGENCIES:** Office of Disability Employment Policy

**SUBMITTED BY:** Westat

**SPONSOR:** Chief Evaluation Office

**DATE PREPARED:** June 2021

**CEO CONTACT:** [ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov](mailto:ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov)





# Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities

*The Department of Labor's (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) sponsors independent evaluations and research, primarily conducted by external, third-party contractors in accordance with the [Department of Labor Evaluation Policy](#). CEO's research development process includes extensive technical review at the design, data collection and analysis stage, including: external contractor review and OMB review and approval of data collection methods and instruments per the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), Institutional Review Board (IRB) review to ensure studies adhere to the highest ethical standards, review by academic peers (e.g., Technical Working Groups), and inputs from relevant DOL agency and program officials and CEO technical staff. Final reports undergo an additional independent expert technical review and a review for Section 508 compliance prior to publication. The resulting reports represent findings from this independent research and do not represent DOL positions or policies.*

