



NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON  
**DISABILITY**

## **Kessler Foundation/NOD Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities**

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.

### **The goals of the Survey are to:**

- understand current corporate diversity and disability policies and programs;
- identify what steps employers are taking towards recruiting, training, and retaining people with disabilities;
- understand the barriers employers experience in hiring individuals with disabilities; and
- gauge employers' perception of the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on the occasion of its 20th anniversary.

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



*This survey was made possible by a generous grant from Kessler Foundation.*

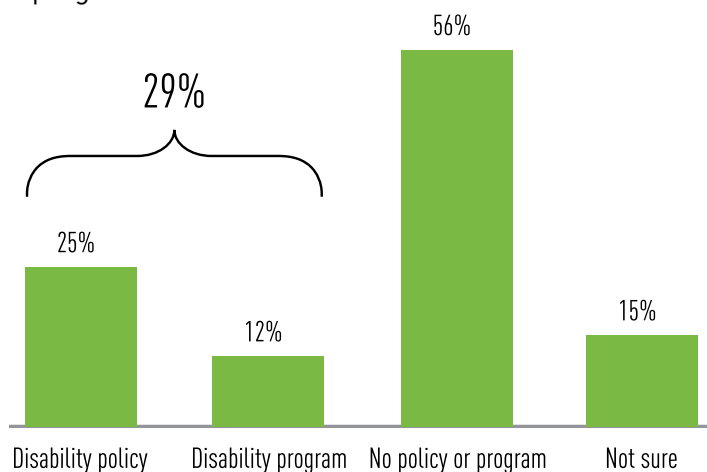
# Two in ten working age Americans with disabilities are employed, compared with roughly six in ten people without disabilities.

Source: Kessler/NOD 2010 Survey of Americans with Disabilities

As a part of NOD's commitment to research, we partnered with Kessler Foundation and Harris Interactive to produce the 2010 Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities. The findings help explain the large employment gap between people with and without disabilities.

## Key Findings

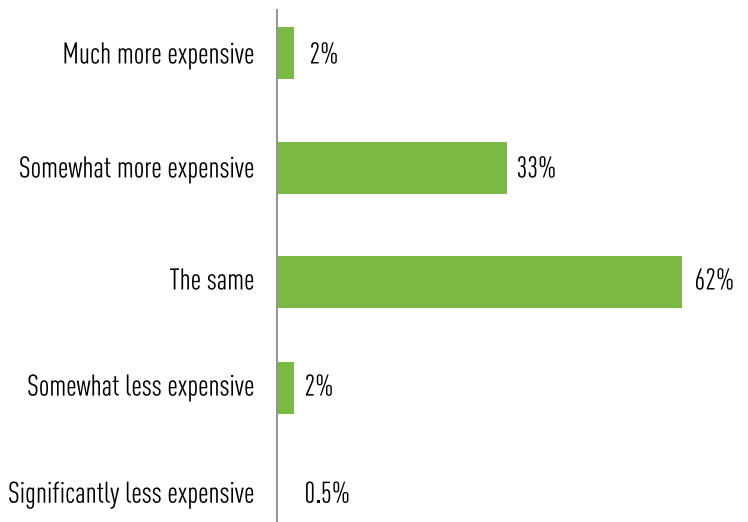
1. Companies are focused on increasing diversity, but not necessarily on hiring people with disabilities as part of their diversity initiatives. While a majority of corporations have a diversity policy or program, just three in ten report having an explicit disability policy or program (with large and medium companies more likely to have a policy or program). Fewer than one in ten companies report having both a disability policy *and* a program.



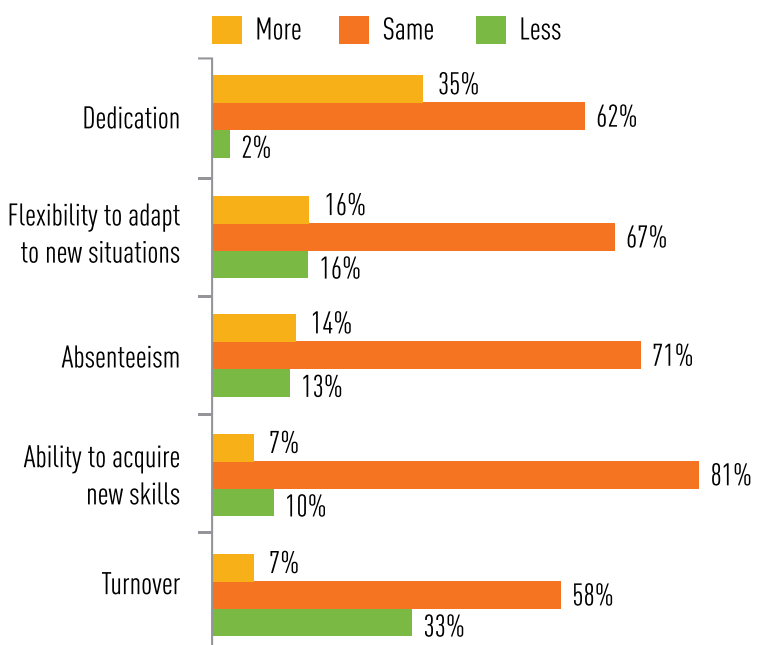
2. Having explicit disability policies and programs positively impacts hiring and retention. Although most managers reported that they do not see high value in their company's disability programs, survey findings suggest that having programs may be more effective than they think. Companies with disability programs are significantly more likely to have hired someone with a disability in the past three years.

3. **Measurement matters.** In business, what matters gets measured—and in this survey only about one in three companies tracked the hiring of people with disabilities.

4. **The cost of hiring people with disabilities is negligible.** In spite of the commonly held perception that recruiting employees with disabilities is costly, most interviewees did not associate extra expense with hiring a person with a disability.



5. **Benefits of hiring people with disabilities are usually considered the same as—and often greater than—hiring people without disabilities.** Most employers say that employees with disabilities have the same flexibility, absenteeism, and aptitude for acquiring new skills as employees without disabilities. More importantly, one-third report that employees with disabilities have more dedication and less turnover.



6. Recruiting talent with disabilities is still a challenge—despite the modest costs and tangible benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Nearly four in ten employers reported difficulty finding qualified candidates with disabilities; and two out of three cited a lack of such candidates as a barrier to hiring. However, recruitment methods may play a role: the most commonly reported methods for recruitment were employee referrals and word-of-mouth. Fewer companies made use of disability-specific recruitment services.

7. In the face of these gaps, nonprofit organizations and community-based service providers are vital employment resources. Roughly four in ten employers turn to service providers for assistance with recruitment, and almost two in three corporations cited assistance finding qualified candidates with disabilities as the most helpful service offered by service agencies. Job sculpting—matching job descriptions to a specific set of skills—was the second most helpful.

[www.2010DisabilitySurveys.org](http://www.2010DisabilitySurveys.org)

# Employing People With Disabilities

Many businesses have created programs to recruit people with disabilities into their workforces—and to better support those who are already on the job. Here are five steps to help with the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities:

- 1 Recognize that hiring people with disabilities makes for a diverse and productive workforce.**  
People with disabilities have the same or better performance, absenteeism rates, and turnover as all employees. Additionally, people with disabilities often have enhanced problem-solving skills, persistence, and creativity. Those attributes can translate into higher productivity in the workforce.
- 2 Appoint a dedicated recruiter to find employees with disabilities.**  
Recruiting people with disabilities, like any new employee group, does require persistence and focus. If you need assistance, specialized recruiters—both for-profit and nonprofit—can help find qualified candidates and tailor jobs to help employers get the most out of their new hires.
- 3 Create an affinity group for people with disabilities.**  
Affinity groups—often geared to women and racial and ethnic minorities—are great ways to boost morale and keep the needs of diverse employees on the company's agenda. Creating such a group for employees with disabilities can yield similar benefits, including networking, mentoring, and assistance in understanding the organization's corporate culture.
- 4 Set hiring targets.**  
Most organizations have diversity hiring targets—and those targets should include benchmarks for hiring people with disabilities. Think about your annual hiring targets, and create reporting systems to ensure that targets are met.
- 5 Create an inclusive work environment.**  
Companies that prize diversity can adopt a number of strategies to welcome talented employees with disabilities. This involves making disability a specific part of their diversity agenda; creating an environment in which any employee is comfortable asking for what they need to do their job; and using accessible technology in recruitment tools.

# NOD AND EMPLOYMENT: What We Do

Since turning our focus to employment in 2006, NOD is becoming a resource for practical wisdom for the disability employment field. We are developing and evaluating innovative approaches to disability employment that can be scaled up for high impact. Our signature programs include the following:

The **Wounded Warrior Careers** demonstration assists the most severely injured veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as they transition into civilian careers. Working in collaboration with the US Army, NOD offers high-touch support to veterans and their families. We guide them through the full range of options available to them from service providers, employers, schools, government agencies and other institutions that offer career transition support. Our goal is to develop new models of helping veterans and their families achieve economic self-sufficiency.

**Bridges to Business** works with corporate America to develop and demonstrate effective disability employment practices. NOD acts as a broker between employers and providers of employment services to career-seekers with disabilities. We help companies set hiring goals for employees with disabilities, track progress, improve communication between employers and disability employment agencies, provide training on disability awareness and effective hiring practices, and assist with the development of workplace accommodations.

**Start on Success (SOS)** prepares high school students with disabilities from low-income urban families for careers through paid internships in community businesses. Under the SOS model, schools provide classroom teachers as job coaches, and employers provide internship opportunities and worksite managers to act as mentors. At least 75% of the more than 3,500 SOS graduates have gone on to post-secondary education or employment.

NOD is committed to understanding the issues underlying the employment gap for Americans with disabilities to better inform policy and practice. Our research efforts include the following:

In partnership with Kessler Foundation, NOD is continuing our **Harris Surveys**, which have been an authoritative source of data on disability for over two decades. In 2010, Kessler and NOD released two surveys on the status of Americans with disabilities.

**Return to Careers** is a national research project designed to better understand the process of recovery and re-entry into civilian life faced by veterans with disabilities returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. NOD turns to the veterans themselves, their family members, and those that work with them (including employers and service providers) to learn about their career interests and support needs, in an effort to help ensure that veterans with disabilities find success in the career marketplace.