

# Understanding Disability and the Australian Workplace

Results from a national research commissioned by JobAccess.

#EmployTheirAbility





## MESSAGE

Workplace adjustments are a powerful asset when building truly inclusive and accessible workplaces.

Accessible services, workplaces and communities are vital to improving the socio-economic participation of 4.4 million Australians with disability, especially in employment.

The benefits of employing people with disability are clear. People with disability have lower rates of absenteeism and staff turnover and fewer workplace injuries than other workers.

Yes, just over 50% of people with disability are in the labour force compared with 84% of those without disability, and this gap has essentially remained unchanged for nearly 20 years.

One of the tools available to support people with disability at work is workplace adjustments. While not all people with disability may require adjustments at work, knowing how to provide adjustments can help employers attract and employ an often overlooked talent pool.

JobAccess surveyed over 1,000 people nationwide to gauge the general awareness of disability and, more specifically, the understanding of workplace adjustments.

In this resource, we highlight the results from the survey and share a wide range of free and useful resources employers can access to support people with disability at work.

Hiring a person with disability shouldn't be seen as an issue to be overcome but an opportunity to build stronger teams.

**Daniel Valiente Riedl**  
General Manager  
JobAccess

## Have you heard of workplace adjustments?

 **70%**

of respondents haven't heard of workplace adjustments.

 **66%**

of respondents with disability were not aware of workplace adjustments.

 ONLY **1 in 3**

see workplace adjustments as something that is easy.



Workplace adjustments are administrative, environmental, or procedural changes that enable people with disability to have equitable employment opportunity and work effectively and comfortably.

[See this video](#) to learn about the different supports and services available through JobAccess to make adjustments in the workplace.

## Who is responsible for making workplace adjustments?

 **62%**

see the employer as responsible for workplace adjustments.

 **62%**

agree that they would be comfortable to ask for a workplace adjustment.

 **52%**

agree that they would be more likely to choose to work for an employer who asked about workplace adjustments as part of the recruitment process.

 **69%**

agree that making workplace adjustments for a person with disability is an important part of a manager's job.



Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), if an employer is aware of an employee's disability, they must provide what is regarded '**reasonable adjustment**' – also known as workplace adjustment – to accommodate the needs of the employee (unless that adjustment would result in unjustifiable hardship).

## What is the cost of making workplace adjustments?



**2 in 5** respondents estimate the cost of workplace adjustments to be significant.



**Fact:** The majority of workplace adjustments are low cost and some changes, such as providing flexible working hours, involve no cost at all and benefit all employees, not just those living with disability.

## Have you ever benefited from a workplace adjustment?

e.g. flexibility of hours or accessible equipment



**34%** respondents said they benefited from workplace adjustments.



17% of respondents in our research identified as living with disability. However, twice that number said they have benefited from a workplace adjustment.

Workplace adjustments can help all employees, with or without disability.

## How confident are you in making workplace adjustments?



**35%**

agree that talking about workplace adjustments with an employee is outside their comfort zones.



**61%**

are unsure or do not know how to arrange workplace adjustments for an employee with disability.



Some workplace adjustments can be easy to implement, such as flexible work arrangements.

People with disability, employers and service providers can contact JobAccess on **1800 464 800** to organise workplace adjustments.

They may be eligible to receive financial assistance to cover the costs of making such adjustments through the **Australian Government's Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)**.

## Getting outside your comfort zone and gaining exposure



**72%**

of respondents agree that gaining exposure to disability in the workplace would build confidence.



**34%**

agree that the fear of saying or doing the wrong thing would prevent them from employing a person with disability.

## Taking active steps to promote disability employment



**72%**

agree that it's an employer's responsibility to ensure a workplace is accessible by everyone.



**68%**

agree that organisations have a duty to employ a diverse workforce.



**60%**

agree that employers should be actively trying to employ people with disability.

## Supporting employees with disability at each stage



**77%**

agree that young people with disability deserve extra support to get their first job.



**69%**

agree that disability impacts a person's chance of promotion.

## Start your disability confidence journey

The **National Disability Recruitment Coordinator (NDRC)** offers **free, tailored 12-month partnerships** to larger employers with the intent to build their disability confidence and capability to employ and retain people with disability.

Having partnered with over 340 larger organisations across the public and private sector, the NDRC has the right expertise and resources to guide your disability inclusion efforts.

The 'Understanding disability and the Australian workplace' survey was conducted by Antenna Insights on behalf of JobAccess in September 2021. Approximately 1,000 Australians were surveyed, with the nationally representative sample weighted by age and gender to the 2016 ABS Census to ensure accurate representation.