

Research Report

Uncovering Hidden Potential:
**Non-Apparent
Disabilities in
the Workplace**

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Understanding a Talent Pool

The challenge of finding, keeping and developing talented people is more likely to keep senior business leaders up at night than anything else. Of growing interest is tapping the unemployed and underemployed talent pool of employees with apparent and non-apparent disabilities. The unique experience of these employees in the workplace needs to be understood and defined so that employers can create successful employee value propositions and inclusive environments in which they can thrive.

In the Working Mother Research Institute (WMRI)'s 2016 report, "Disabilities in the Workplace," of all survey respondents who identified as people with disabilities, 64 percent indicated their disability was non-apparent, and women were 11 percent more likely than men to identify with a non-apparent disability. This piqued our interest and encouraged us to ask more questions.

WMRI initiated this new study to learn more about the employment experiences and challenges of those with non-apparent disabilities and then to share that learning with potential employers. Understanding that the important quality of feeling included at work means different things to different people encouraged us to survey more than 1,600 adults who identify as having various non-apparent disabilities, allowing us to give voice to their thoughts, ideas and opinions. We were able to uncover a treasure-trove of data, which we organized in three categories: mental-health disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and the subset of cognitive, which includes those with autism/ASD/Asperger Syndrome.

Corporate America is paying close attention. Organizations of all sizes and in all industries are tapping this unique pool of talent and exploring ways to identify, hire, retain and grow this precious human resource. We share their stories and case studies as well.

In "Uncovering Hidden Potential: Non-Apparent Disabilities in the Workplace," WMRI is furthering this important conversation to the benefit of employees and employers alike.



Suzanne Richards, Ed.D.
Director of Research
Working Mother Research Institute

Introduction

The work experience—from the application/interview process through onboarding and then to successfully handling a job and being promoted—is very different for people with non-apparent disabilities. Recruiters, hiring managers, supervisors and co-workers are often prepared when an employee with obvious disabilities is considered or hired. However, when the employee has a non-apparent disability, the visual cues of disability are not obvious and, therefore, the employer may not be sensitive to the need for accommodations. The applicant/employee may choose not to disclose a non-apparent disability for a variety of reasons, and the resulting communications gap can lead to negative perceptions for both the employer and the applicant/employee.

Even when an employee discloses a disability to HR or a supervisor, in a culture where people are uncomfortable discussing disabilities, co-workers may erroneously perceive someone getting “special treatment” because the reason for the accommodation is not obvious or apparent. That too can create a stressful and an unproductive work environment.

Why is it so crucial to find and successfully integrate people with non-apparent disabilities into the workplace? In an economic environment where talent is often hard to find, especially in technical positions, hiring these employees can fill a large void. Both the research on and interviews with organizations hiring people with non-apparent disabilities show a significant improvement in engagement and job satisfaction when they are able to disclose.

“The reason why so many organizations are doing this now is because there is low unemployment. Organizations are scrambling to compete and looking for untapped talent,” says David Kearon, director of adult services at Autism Speaks.

But there are other positives as well. People with autism, who more recently have been considered neurodiverse, can bring different and valuable perspectives on looking at challenges and creating workplace solutions. For employers, there are other benefits as well, including increased productivity, improved management skills, community support and positive feedback from clients.

“Many organizations are positively recruiting people with disabilities not because of compliance with legislation or out of a sense of charity, but because this talent accelerates innovation, reduces turnover in critical roles, increases overall employee engagement and burnishes their brand. There is no need to ‘get ready’ to hire people with disabilities—accommodations are appropriately characterized as reasonable and are most often no or low cost, no different from any other productivity tool provided to employees. The best way to get started is just to do it,” says

Methodology

The Working Mother Research Institute developed the “Uncovering Hidden Potential: Non-Apparent Disabilities in the Workplace” survey and fielded it nationally through its knowledge partners and Survey Sampling International in early 2018, assessing the perceptions of people who identify as having these disabilities. The emails to these individuals contained a link to an online questionnaire hosted by Bonnier Custom Insights (a division of Bonnier Corporation).

A total of 1,604 qualified individuals (1,291 with mental-health disabilities and 476 with cognitive disabilities or autism) submitted completed online questionnaires. All qualified respondents were employed or looking for employment.

Bonnier Custom Insights received and tabulated the responses, which were then analyzed by Maria S. Ferris Consulting LLC. The results are documented in this report, which was written by the Working Mother Research Institute.

Deb Dagit, president of Deb Dagit Diversity LLC, former chief diversity officer at Merck & Co., and an expert on disability issues.

Working Mother Research Institute's 2016 study on all people with disabilities revealed that employees with non-apparent disabilities had a significantly different work experience and were less satisfied with their jobs than people with apparent disabilities. Based on that research, we decided to take a deeper look at employees in the "Uncovering Hidden Potential: Non-Apparent Disabilities in the Workplace" survey, focusing on three groups—those with mental disabilities (post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, post-partum depression, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), schizophrenia, seasonal affective disorder, etc.); cognitive disabilities (attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, traumatic brain injury (TBI), etc.); and people with autism, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Asperger Syndrome.

Significant findings from our new survey include:

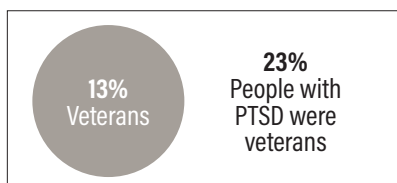
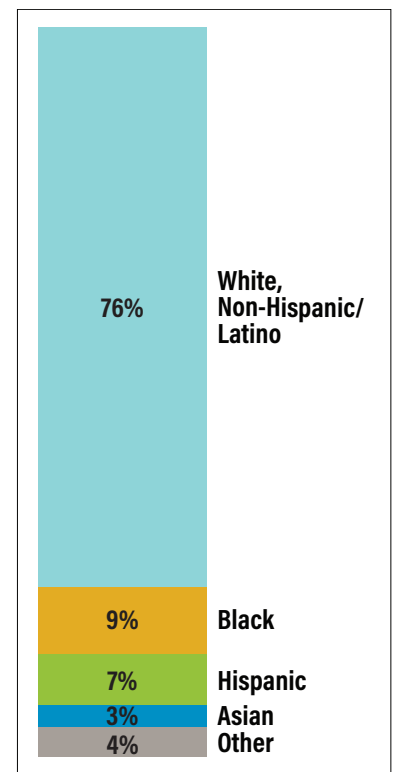
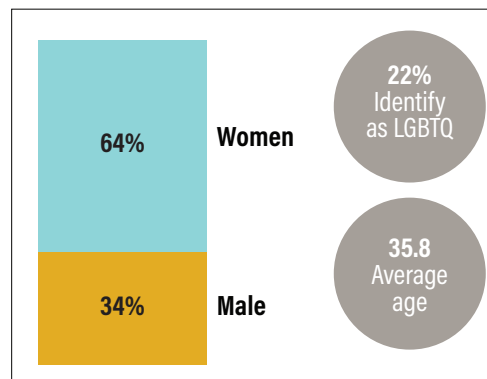
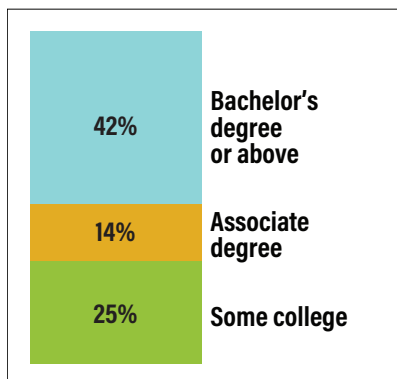
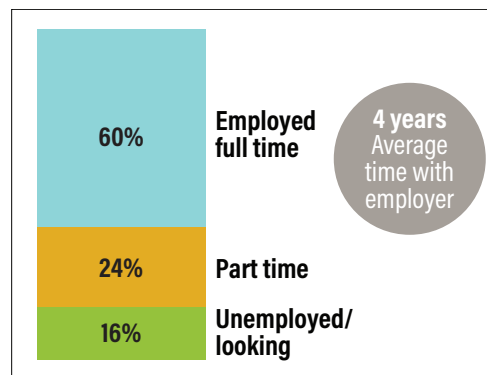
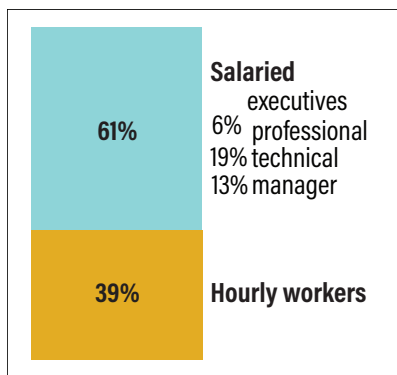
- ➔ A single disability does not define a person; most participants reported multiple disabilities
- ➔ Employees who have disclosed their disabilities are more satisfied and engaged at work than those who do not disclose
- ➔ There is an opportunity for employers to increase the number of employees who have disclosed
- ➔ 53 percent of the participants have disclosed their disability; 47 percent have not disclosed
- ➔ The primary reason employees do not disclose is they don't believe it interferes with their job
- ➔ 30 percent were uncomfortable sharing the information; 11 percent didn't want their employer to know; 11 percent said their employer didn't ask
- ➔ Employers are doing a good job of providing accommodation; however, better communication on the process would be helpful
- ➔ 75 percent of people who disclosed their disability requested accommodations. For those who requested an accommodation, 88 percent had all or some approved and 3 percent were still waiting for approval
- ➔ Retention and utilization of talent remains a concern
- ➔ 87 percent are at risk of leaving their employer
- ➔ Managing the demands of work/personal life is perceived as a top obstacle
- ➔ Very few people reported having a mentor, sponsor, job coach or role model with disabilities
- ➔ The difference in satisfaction and workplace experience for those who did have mentors was significant
- ➔ The largest influence on overall employee satisfaction were role models with disabilities in their organization

Survey Participant Overview

1,604 Qualified Participants



Note: Some respondents have more than one disability.



Disclosing Their Disability

One of the greatest challenges people with non-apparent disabilities face is deciding whether and when to disclose their disability. Friends and family may caution them against disclosure for fear of not getting a job or facing repercussions at work. Yet without disclosure, their employers or prospective employers may judge them unfairly or not make accommodations to allow them to perform at their best.

For these employees, disclosure is a significant factor in their engagement and overall satisfaction. Sixty-five percent of those who disclosed said they were satisfied with how their career was progressing versus 44 percent who did not disclose.

But disclosure is tricky, both in the interviewing process and once a person is hired. Our data shows that 60 percent of people with cognitive disabilities and 59 percent of people with autism are more likely to disclose than those with mental-health disabilities (50 percent). When asked why they didn't disclose, most people said they believed their disability didn't interfere with the job and that they were uncomfortable sharing the information.

Melanie Wetzel, lead consultant on the Cognitive Neurological Team for the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy's Job Accommodation Network, says many people with non-apparent disabilities want to disclose but are concerned about how they will be perceived.

"Most people want to be honest and upfront and think, 'If they don't want to work with me, then they're not going to want to work with me when I need accommodations.'" But, she says, they are still afraid that disclosing their disability will cost them the job.

Disclosure requires an environment in which employees are comfortable self-identifying, and that can be difficult to create, says Andy Imparato, executive director of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities.

Imparato, who identifies as bipolar, says the corporate environment is changing but that applicants and employees are still nervous disclosing. "People get the message from family and friends that there's no benefit to telling their employer. But if you need an accommodation, you can't get it without disclosing the disability."

Employers, he says, are now trying to "create a culture where people are comfortable having the conversation." They do this by having internal and external people tell their stories. Employees who have children, parents, spouses or other loved ones with non-apparent disabilities become allies and work with the employers to create an environment where people can succeed.

"It's a very personal decision," says Kearon of Autism Speaks. There are pros and cons. While there have been real fears of discrimination in the past, these organization initiatives have shown that increasingly the organizations are looking out for you."

People with
cognitive disabilities are
more likely to disclose

60%

vs.

mental disabilities

50%

59%

of people with autism
have disclosed

When to disclose

THOSE WHO DID DISCLOSE

- Have disclosed their disability to their employer

53%

- Disclosed disability when they applied

57%

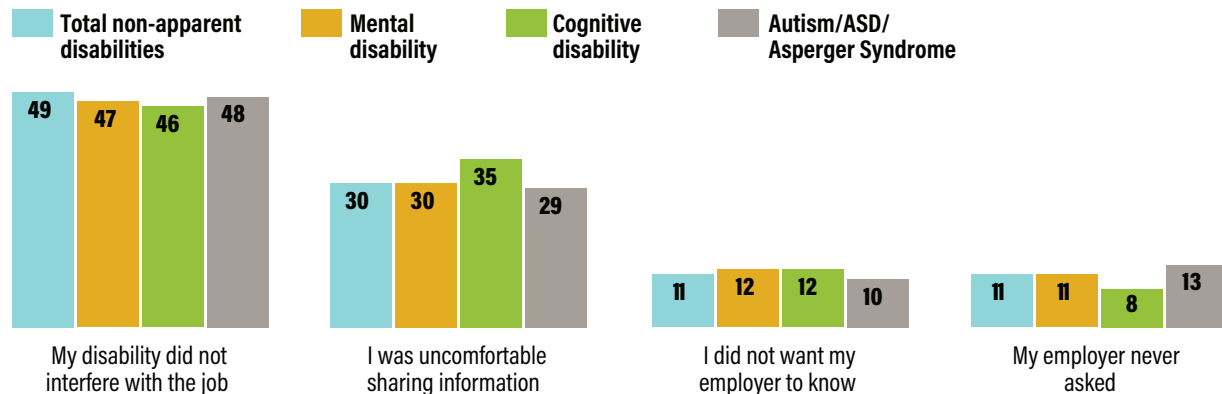
- During the interview process

10%

- After offer or beginning employment

34%

Why didn't you disclose?



Numbers are %

Workplace Experience: Career and Advancement

% WHO AGREE

	Employees who have disclosed their disability	Employees who have not disclosed their disability
I am optimistic about my ability to continue working	65	42
I have the same opportunity to advance in my company as anyone else	74	60
I know what I need to do to get ahead in my company	68	49
I have tried to hide my disability at work	57	55
I am satisfied with how my career is progressing	65	44
I am optimistic about my ability to advance	59	41
I worry about my ability to continue working due to my disability	57	38
I think I am currently underemployed based on my skills and abilities	52	41
I have passed up more demanding jobs/roles due to my disability	54	36
My disability gets in the way of my performance	51	36
I believe my disability will limit my ability to advance in my company	47	36
I do not think I am performing my best at work	40	29

I. Finding and Hiring

The recruitment and hiring process gives both the employers and the prospective employees the ability to experience each other and determine if the relationship will be a good fit. If the employee is found through a job vocational service for people with disabilities, the employer will know about the disability in advance and can arrange for accommodations during the interview process. The accommodations vary, depending on the disability, but can include a differently structured interview for people who are neurodiverse, so that there is less emphasis on conversation and more on noting skills and abilities.

Our research shows most of the respondents thought their interview processes were successful in terms of recruiters and hiring managers being respectful, discussions of the disability and potential accommodations in the workplace, information about the organization's efforts and accommodations for people with disabilities, and the eventual transition as a new hire in the workplace.

When asked what would most improve the process, the respondents asked for the opportunity to speak to others with disabilities in the organization, for recruiters who were knowledgeable about their particular disability, and for a better understanding of accommodations and the organization's policies on disabilities.

People with autism offered specific input about the hiring process, with 65 percent saying they would have liked the opportunity to show their skills

through a different kind of assessment instead of a traditional interview. Fifty-two percent said they would have liked to know to whom they would speak during the interview process, and 45 percent said it would have helped to understand what questions they would be asked before the interview took place.

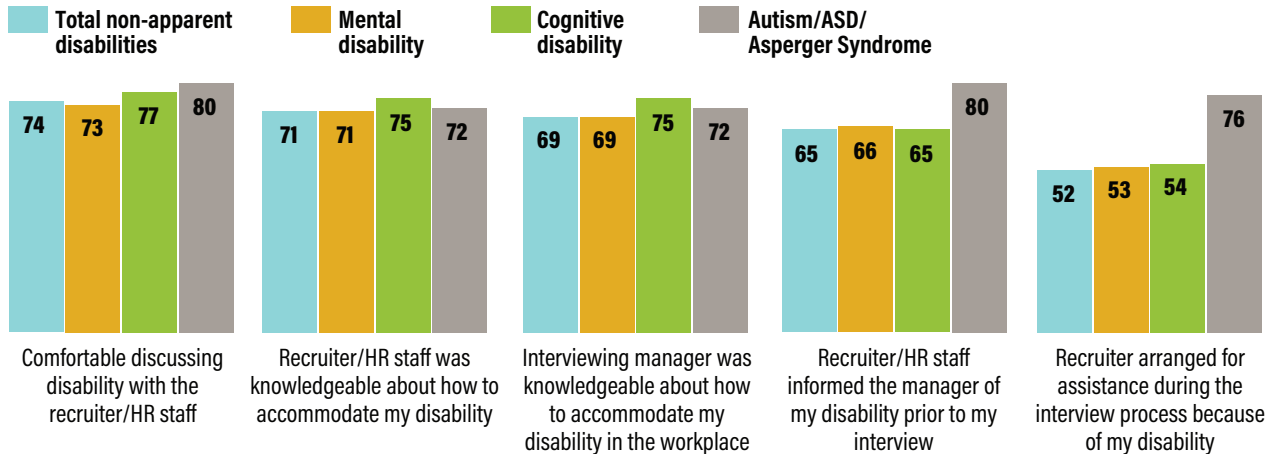
Kearon of Autism Speaks notes that some interviewers are revamping their process for candidates with autism. "Because of the nature of their disability, these candidates have difficulty communicating. These employers were willing to throw [the normal process] out the window and try something new. These alternate assessments allow the employers to hire, for example, better software developers not by conversational interviews but by giving them tasks to perform."

Sarah Parsons, director of the Northwest Center, a nonprofit that places people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in jobs, says a model that has been successful at organizations such as Amazon involves training both hiring staff and support people to handle interviews and applications differently. "People are set up for success."

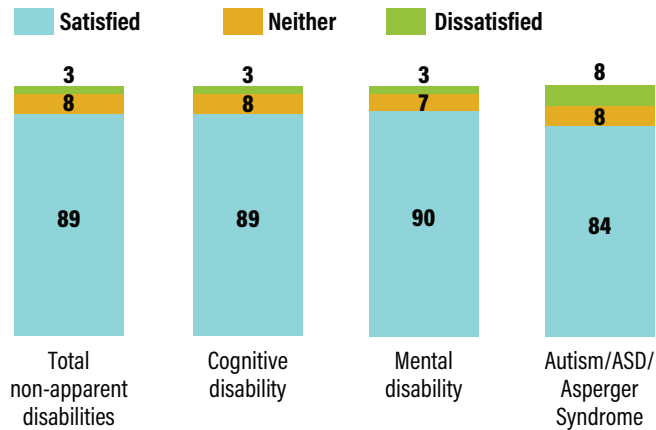
Once the employee is placed, a job coach helps managers and co-workers set them up for success. "Issues are addressed before anything can threaten their job ... we pay attention to metrics, performance, productivity, safety incidences, quality of their work, attendance, attrition. Folks we have placed have been outperforming in all these characteristics.

Interview/Hiring Process

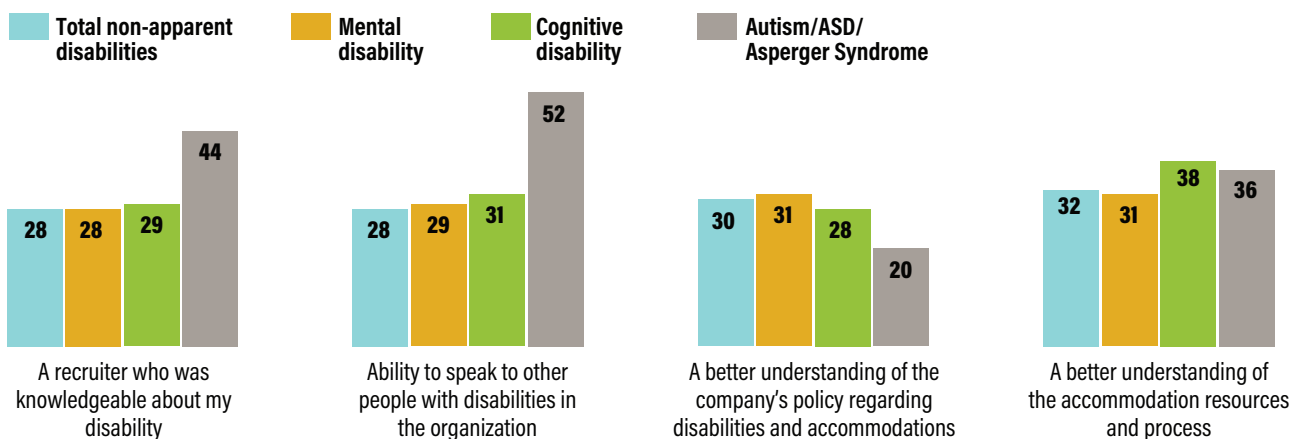
Overall, high marks for the recruiting/hiring process.



Overall, 89% are satisfied with the recruiting/hiring process, however, there are opportunities to improve the process.



What would most improve the process?



Numbers are %

CASE STUDY

Freddie Mac

More than 10 years ago, Freddie Mac realized that there was a potential solution to the hiring gap the organization was experiencing in finding technical employees: people on the autism spectrum who wanted to be employed.

“We came together to design a program to work with the Autism Self-Advocacy Network,” recalls Stephanie Roemer, director of Diversity & Inclusion. “We helped design a program and created training for our managers, including how to assess and write a job description.” This was particularly important because many jobs were designed to require the employee to spend specific time doing specific tasks—for example, 60 percent of time on the computer, 30 percent filing and 10 percent answering phones. “So, we needed to adjust because phone answering didn’t have to be a requirement of the job. For someone on the spectrum, that might not be ideal,” she recalls. “We studied how the job looks and what functions were critical.”

The first cohort had four to five interns, and the employee resource group Abilities was used to help mentor the interns at work.

Last year, Freddie Mac shifted its hiring approach. Instead of finding managers willing to hire the interns, they hired the candidates and shopped them around internally to look for the right fit.

The interns, four to five a year, are hired for 16-week stints, with their salaries paid from the Office of Diversity & Inclusion. Most are extended an additional 16 weeks, with their salaries funded by the departments that hire them. Fifty percent have been converted to full-time, permanent employees with benefits and professional-level jobs, says Roemer.

CASE STUDY EY

In the fall of 2015, the professional-services firm began outreach to hire people on the autism spectrum, driven by the need for innovation and clients expressing interest in the value of hiring people with disabilities.

The effort has taken off, significantly improving a data-management technology role. “We thought it was a spark, and now we are seeing fireworks,” says Hiren Shukla, who leads EY’s Neurodiversity Center of Excellence.

The firm had its first pilot effort in March 2016 in Philadelphia with the hiring of four individuals and immediately saw value. “In the first week of orientation, one of the individuals noticed that we were missing a step in setting up voicemail. We onboard 50,000 people a year and no one else pointed out this small detail. Time is money and this really helped us,” says Shukla.

The positions are primarily data-management and technology jobs, and the employees are brought in as full-time, salaried, permanent employees. A key job filled by these individuals is account support, and it involves taking mass amounts of data from clients and analyzing it to provide insights. The employees hired with autism have been major contributors in this job, he says, which

is why the program is being expanded. “We feel we have hit the gold mine,” he says, adding that “we thought we were training them and they were training us. The levels of clarity they bring are crucial.”

Another six individuals are being hired in Philadelphia, and in June 2017, another group of 10 was launched in Dallas with plans for another 10 and 12 people with autism now being hired for EY’s offices in San Jose, California, Cleveland and Toronto. “Our model is to hire them wherever we are hiring for this type of data analytics and automation competency. We are going to go wherever the business is,” he says.

EY partners with local groups, such as the ARC of Philadelphia, to find employees and to bring in job coaches to help the employees find challenging work and have the right support. The firm has collaborated with other businesses (Microsoft, SAP, XC, JPMorgan Chase and Ford Motor Company) as part of the national Autism At Work effort to develop best practices to hire people with autism. “I have never seen collaboration of this sort in the corporate world. We are tied at the hip, sharing ideas on sourcing, identification and onboarding,” says Shukla.

II. Accommodations

The research shows that many people who are neurodiverse and have the types of disabilities identified here are uncomfortable disclosing their disabilities but to receive the types of accommodations they need, it's imperative that they disclose. It is possible, says Dagit, to request an accommodation without revealing a specific diagnosis. "They should be able to share that information [what they need for an accommodation]. They shouldn't have to share their specific diagnosis like PTSD or bipolar," she says. Although there are situations where federal law allows employers to ask for a diagnosis, many employers do not, if the request is clear about how one is limited because of a medical condition.

Three-quarters of our respondents requested accommodations in the workplace, and the majority of those requests were approved. Women were more likely to say they did not request an accommodation (31 percent) than men (19 percent). The most common person from whom they seek an accommodation is their manager or supervisor (69 percent), with 11 percent seeking out a designated accommodation representative, 8 percent going to HR and 5 percent going to the facilities department.

The most common types of accommodations overall were flexible work schedules and modifications to the workplace, but for people with cognitive disabilities and autism, the most common types of accommodations were an ergonomic workstation and additional time to complete tasks. Of note, 47 percent of those who requested accommodations said having a better understanding of the organization's policies would improve their overall experience.

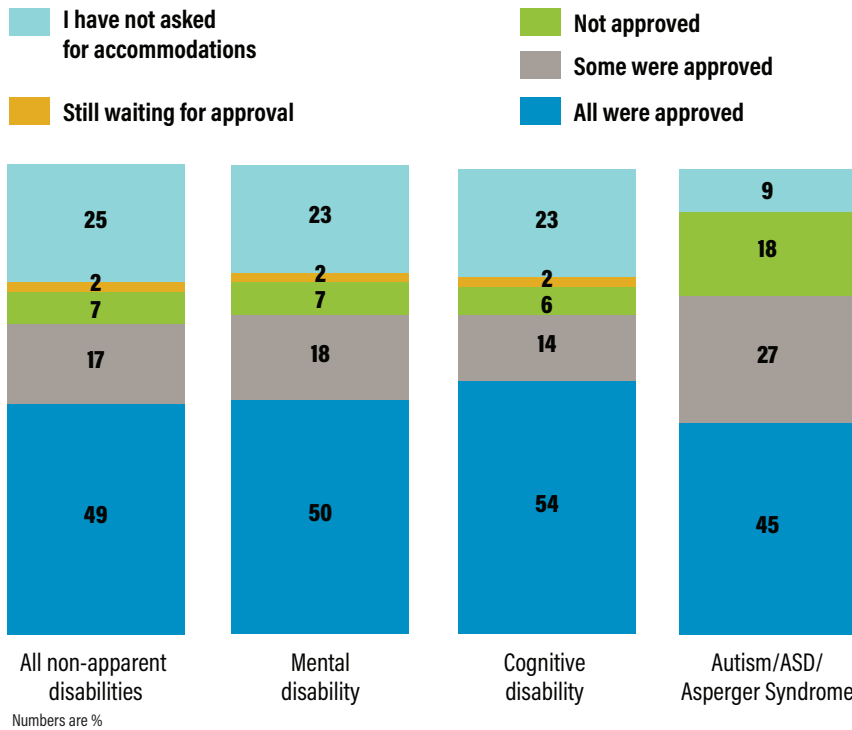
These findings show up throughout the data. When asked about what in the workplace would be most helpful for success, respondents cited primarily a quiet place to go and take a break (77 percent) and the ability to work flexible hours (77 percent). When asked about the most significant obstacles to advancement, the first cited difficulty balancing work and personal life (28 percent) and lack of training (19 percent).

Accommodations vary, depending on the type of disability the person has. Boston Scientific, for example, has been working with people with mental-health disabilities. In the past two years, Boston Scientific has increased its efforts to provide education and awareness on mental-health disabilities.

Lynn Prust, director of Employment Policy and Employee Relations, says that she and the company have been providing support to employees with these types of disabilities for a number of years but she's noticed an increase in awareness and educational efforts within the organization.

"During training for our managers and HR business partners we've discussed the importance of providing the right support for anyone with a mental-health condition," she says. The training emphasizes open dialogue with employees. "If employees feel comfortable coming forward and discussing their particular needs, it helps us accommodate them. If an employee is dealing with a sensitive situation related to their particular condition, we can talk about what resources they may need."

Effective Workplace Accommodations



69%
went to their manager/
supervisor to request the
accommodation

11%
went to a designated
accommodation
representative

8%
went to HR

5%
went to facilities

Accommodations in the Workplace

Most common types of accommodations that were approved:

All non-apparent disabilities	Mental disability	Cognitive disability	Autism/ASD/Asperger Syndrome
Flexible work schedule	Flexible work schedule	Ergonomic workstation	Ergonomic workstation Additional time to complete tasks
Modifications to the workspace	Modifications to the workspace	Flexible work schedule	Work schedule modifications
Ergonomic workstation	Ergonomic workstation	Additional time to complete tasks	Modifications to workspace Workspace moved to space free of distractions
Additional time to complete tasks	Work reassignment	Private workspace	Flexible work schedule

Flexibility, Work/Life Issues

Things that would be most helpful in managing your demands

1. Ability to take time off with pay for medical appointments



2. Ability to change my work hours



3. Ability to work from home



4. Access to someone who can run errands for me



5. Access to someone who can do odd jobs around my house



6. Someone who can help me prioritize what I need to get done



IV. Perceptions of Employees with Non-Apparent Disabilities

The research shows most respondents have a clear understanding of their organization's business goals, but there is work to be done to prove a culture of inclusion for people with non-apparent disabilities. Only 40 percent agree their organization is committed to recruiting and advancing people with disabilities, and few see visible role models with disabilities. People with mental disabilities are less likely to feel a spirit of collaboration or feel their organization is sensitive to their needs compared with people with cognitive disabilities.

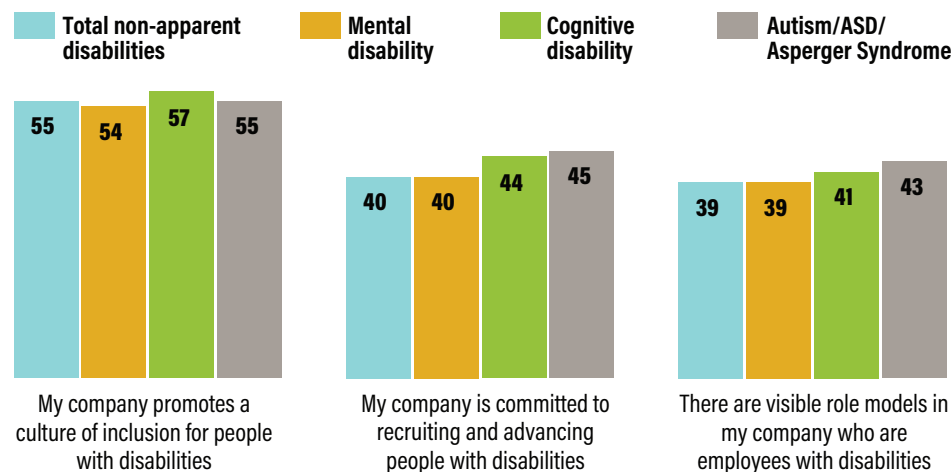
There is, however, a significant risk of losing talent. The majority of respondents (65 percent) say they would leave their current organization if they thought another employer would make better use of their talent and abilities, and only 52 percent said they would recommend their organization to other job seekers with disabilities. Forty-eight percent said they sometimes feel excluded from informal networks in their organization, but that jumps to 57 percent for people with autism.

Relationships with co-workers seem more positive. Seventy-two percent of all respondents agree their co-workers are accepting of them; 66 percent are comfortable socializing with co-workers; and 59 percent feel they are an equal part of their departments. Those numbers are different for people with autism—69 percent feel co-workers are accepting of them; 52 percent are comfortable socializing with co-workers; and 61 percent feel as if they are an equal part of their departments.

The survey shows the respondents (70 percent) are optimistic about their ability to continue working. However, only 55 percent are satisfied with how their careers are progressing, and 42 percent say their disability will limit their ability to advance in their organization.

When asked why they are not contributing their best at work, the top three reasons cited were feeling tired during working hours (35 percent), difficulty concentrating on tasks (26 percent), and distracting work environment, too many interruptions, worry about what co-workers think about them (20 percent).

Overall Satisfaction



Numbers are %

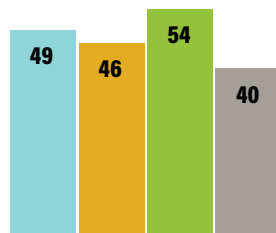
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Overall Satisfaction

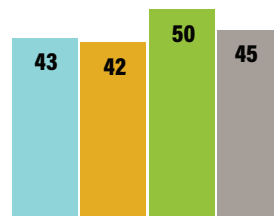
	Total non-apparent disabilities	Mental disability	Cognitive disability	Autism/ASD/Asperger Syndrome
Career prospects	52	51	58	47
Job security	61	60	62	60
Relationship with co-workers	66	65	67	60
Amount of information you have to do your job	64	63	67	59
Communication you receive about matters that affect you	57	56	61	57
Opportunity to improve your skills	57	57	59	53
Match between your job interests and the work you do	61	60	64	65
Level of respect you get at work	60	59	63	51
Your compensation relative to your contribution at work	54	53	57	52
How much your opinion counts at work	55	54	55	43
Support from your manager in meeting family & work demands	56	56	60	55
Support from your co-workers in meeting family & work demands	57	57	61	57
Your company's process to request an accommodation	47	46	51	60
OVERALL SATISFACTION	57.4	56.6	60.4	55.3

Satisfaction with Managers, Co-workers

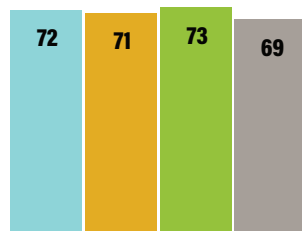
■ Total non-apparent disabilities
 ■ Mental disability
 ■ Cognitive disability
 ■ Autism/ASD/Asperger Syndrome



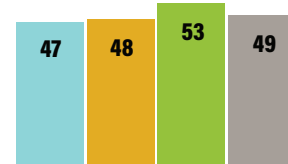
I am comfortable discussing my disability with my supervisor



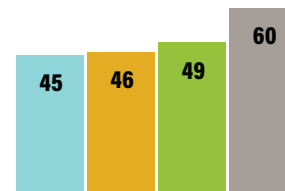
My supervisor is open to making changes in my job to better accommodate my disability



My co-workers are accepting of me



I am comfortable discussing my disability with my co-workers



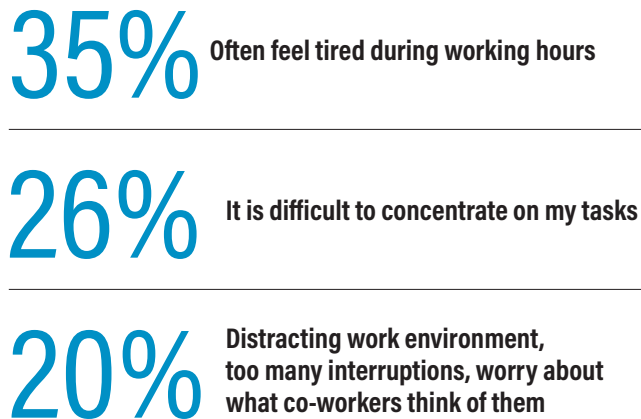
I find it difficult to ask for the help I need because of my disability

Numbers are %

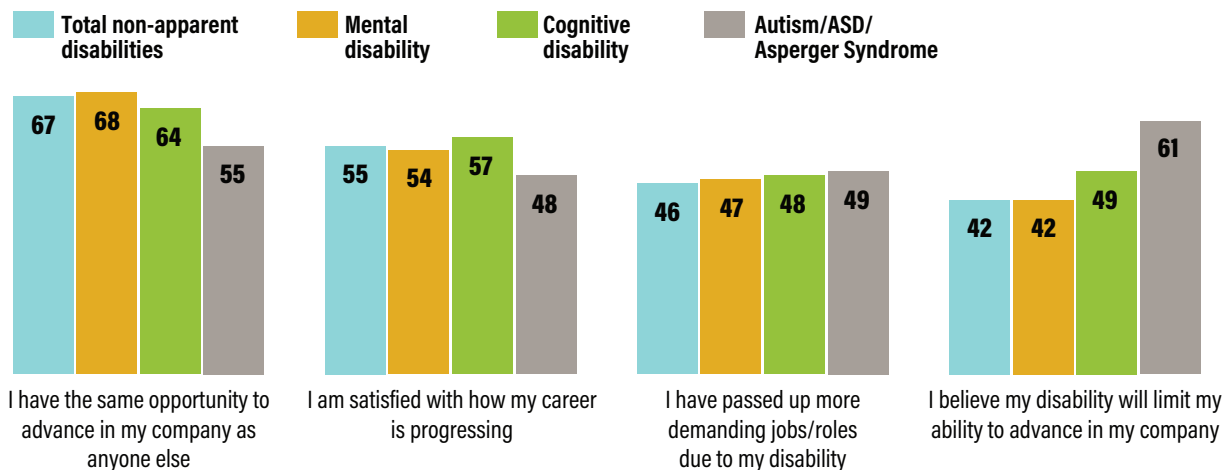
Workplace Experience

Why are you not contributing your best at work?

Top Three Reasons



Aspirations/Goals

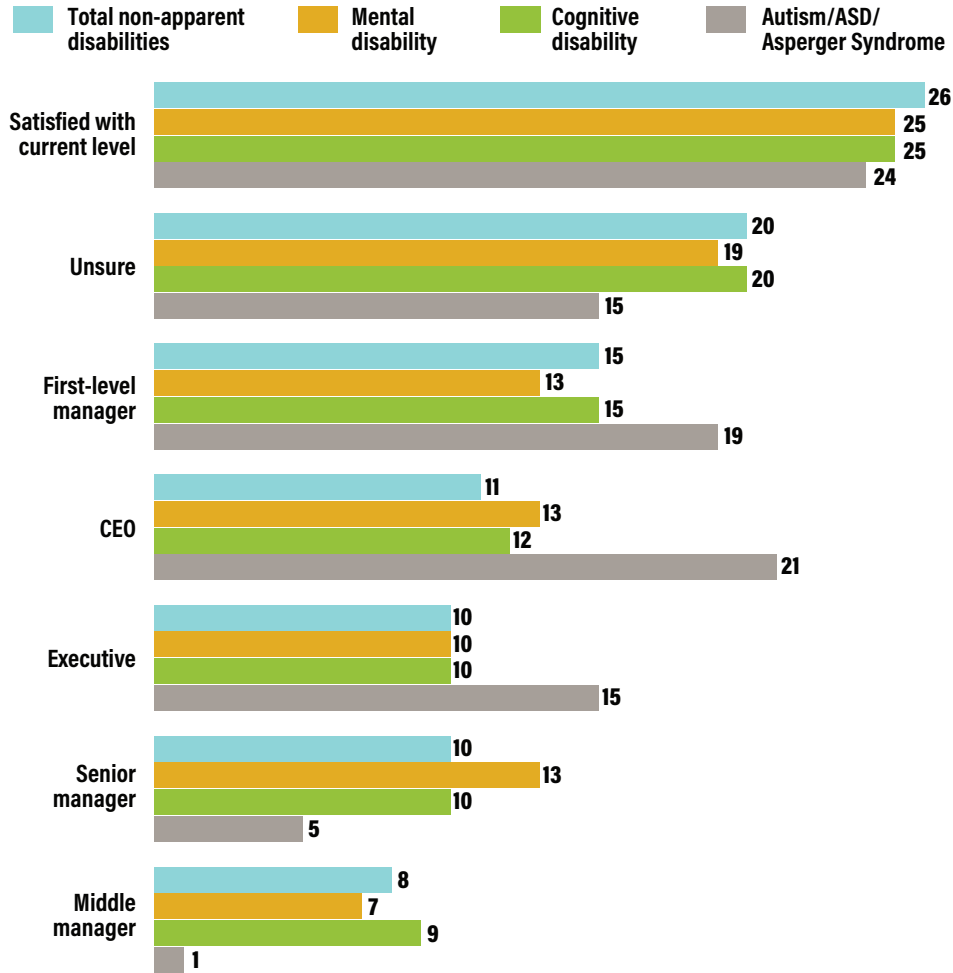


Numbers are %

Career Aspirations

Over half aspire to higher positions; 20% are unsure.

What is the highest level you wish to advance to in your company?



Numbers are %

Perceived Obstacles to Advancement

Difficulty balancing work/personal life is perceived as the biggest obstacle for people with cognitive and mental disabilities.

Priority rank	Total non-apparent disabilities	Cognitive disability	Mental disability	Autism/ASD/Asperger Syndrome
1	Difficulty balancing work/personal life (28%)	Difficulty balancing work/personal life (29%)	Difficulty balancing work/personal life (29%)	Inability to effectively accommodate my disability (27%)
2	Lack of training (19%)	Lack of training (20%)	Lack of training (20%)	Lack of skills (23%) Stereotypes about my disability (23%)
3	Inability to relocate (14%)	Lack of skills (17%)	Lack of skills (16%)	Difficulty balancing work/personal life (17%)

CASE STUDY JPMorgan Chase

At the bank, the conversation around hiring people on the autism spectrum began about four years ago. The organization realized that traditional interviewing techniques didn't emphasize the skills many people with autism have, so they needed to rethink their approach, says James Mahoney, executive director of the firm's Autism at Work program.

More than two years ago, JPMorgan Chase hired its first employees on the autism spectrum to fill software-testing roles. "We found after six months, the autistic testers were equal in quality to peers with five to 10 years' experience but had 48 percent more productivity. We knew we were on to something," he says.

They tried another role for employees with autism: access administration, which means helping new employees get access to the many systems needed to work at the organization. The employees with autism were between 90 and 140 percent more productive than their peers, he reports.

"Now people see the business value. They get their calculators out," he says, noting that the firm has taken its hiring of people on the autism spectrum global in five other countries—India, the Philippines, England, Scotland and Brazil. "We view this as a talent play. Real business results align with our goal of valuing cognitive differences."

And he emphasizes it's not just entry-level positions. JPMorgan Chase has people on the autism spectrum at all levels, including vice presidents. Mahoney notes that the retention rates for the employees with autism are about 80 percent before the probationary period ends and 99 to 100 percent post-probation. And if an employee isn't a good fit, they work with other organizations that have autism hiring programs to help the person find another job.

"We do invest in a lot of training. We believe in educating the recruiter and the manager. We have different video training tracks for managers and for colleagues to demystify and debunk issues on autism," he says.

V. What They Need to Succeed

The importance of tools already in place in the workplace to help people with non-apparent disabilities flourish at work cannot be overestimated.

Only one-third or less report having mentors, sponsors or job coaches, key ways to give people individual attention so their specific challenges, needs and abilities can be addressed. Mentors can help the employee navigate the corporate culture and focus on individual skills they need to be promoted. Sponsors can advocate for them to be promoted.

One-third of the respondents belong to an employee-resource group (or employee network), of which

people with autism are more likely to belong. These groups provide structure and the opportunity to develop skills. Groups focused on people with disabilities advocate for benefits and changes within the organization and can help employees understand what corporate assistance is available to them. They also educate others in the workplace about types of disabilities, accommodations and working with people with disabilities.

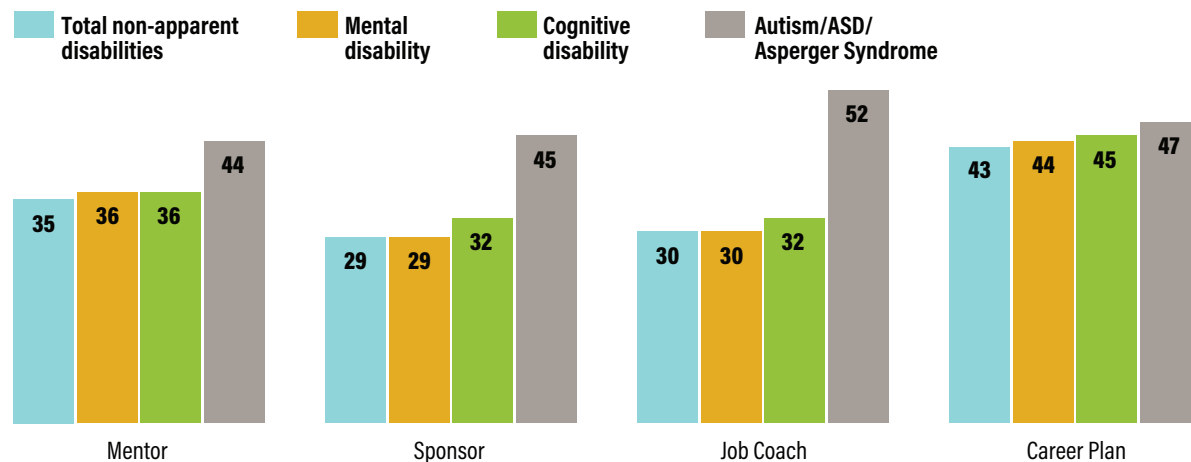
Our respondents, as well as our experts and corporate leaders, have suggested a list of next steps for employers to follow.

Career Development

Mentors, Sponsors, Coaches, Career Plans

- About one-third or less report having mentors, sponsors or job coaches.
- Over 50% of people with autism have a job coach.

% Yes

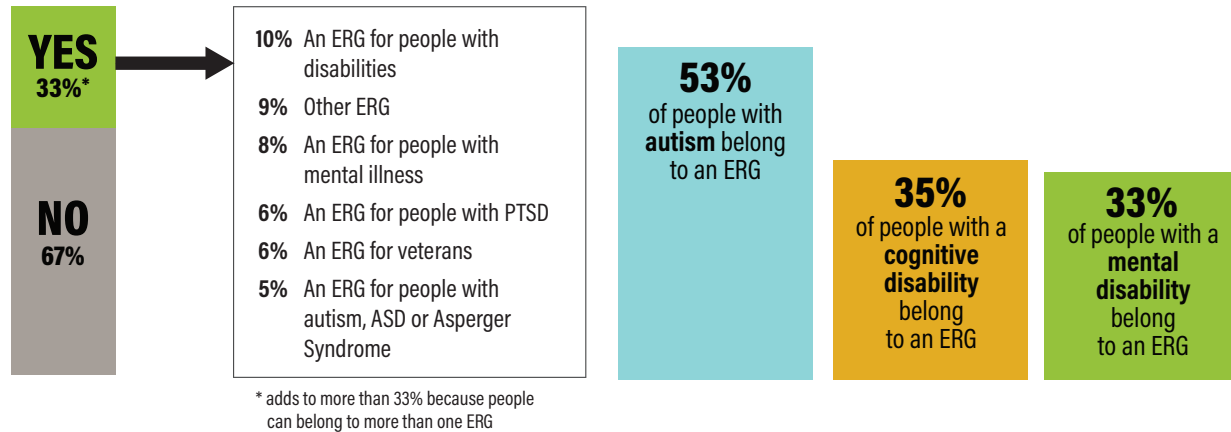


Lack of company mentor program is the primary reason for not having a mentor.

Employee Resource Groups

One-third of people with non-apparent disabilities belong to an employee network or resource group. People with autism are more likely to belong.

Belong to an ERG



Retention Tools

Salary increase, access to health benefits and ability to advance are most important items to retain people with non-apparent disabilities.

Priority rank	Total non-apparent disabilities	Cognitive disability	Mental disability	Autism/ASD/Asperger Syndrome
1	Salary increase	Salary increase	Salary increase	Access to health benefits
2	Access to health benefits	Access to tools to make my job easier	Access to health benefits	Greater flexibility in when work gets done
3	Ability to get ahead	Ability to get ahead Ability to network with employees with similar interests Greater flexibility in how work gets done	Ability to get ahead Ability to network with employees with similar interests	Salary increase Access to information about job accommodations

VI. Next Steps for Employers

- Provide training throughout the organization on understanding all disabilities, but especially on how to deal with people with non-apparent disabilities. Less than half the respondents with non-apparent disabilities felt comfortable discussing their disabilities with their supervisors. This indicates a lack of awareness on the part of the managers and the organization.
- Create a culture where people are comfortable self-identifying and use employee resource groups to build awareness. Also, start a campaign throughout the organization encouraging people to feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work and, therefore, to self-identify as having a disability. Have speakers discuss their own experiences (and those of close relatives and friends) of self-identifying and the benefits (ability to receive more accommodations, co-workers' and managers' support, etc.). Ask about disabilities on anonymous employee engagement surveys and include in results.
- Have an inclusive hiring process. Include information about people with disabilities (and not just apparent disabilities) in your recruitment information and on your website. Allow applicants to meet with employees with disabilities (including non-apparent disabilities) before being hired to discuss their experiences in your workplace.
- Provide quiet spaces to work. Quiet spaces were viewed as the top accommodation to enhance productivity by almost 80 percent of the people with autism, autism spectrum disorder, Asperger syndrome, depression and anxiety.
- Encourage people to join an employee resource group (ERG). Of the respondents, 53 percent with autism joined an ERG, compared with 35 percent of people with cognitive disabilities and 33 percent with a mental-health disability. These groups provide valuable support, education and potential for career advancement.
- Provide mentors for employees with non-apparent disabilities. About a third of the respondents in the survey did not have mentors, and another third said they didn't have role models at work. Providing people who can guide them through the corporate culture (especially if they also have disabilities) can dramatically increase satisfaction. The results showed respondents with mentors reported 78 percent overall satisfaction at work versus 46 percent for those without mentors.



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CONTRIBUTORS

Research • Maria S. Ferris

Designer • Michael Moran

Copy Editor • Audrey St.Clair