

Disability in the Workplace

2023 Insights Report



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Disability Inclusion in the Workplace

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Almost 19 million people with disabilities (PwD) are in the U.S. workforce and they landed jobs in higher numbers in 2022. Workplaces that value people of all abilities are more critical than ever. Initiatives tailored to support PwD are vital to breaking down barriers and fostering a diverse and welcoming work environment. Still, there is much work to be done, as only 40% of working age PwD are gainfully employed.

In its 10th year, the National Organization on Disability's (NOD) Employment Tracker™ is a free and confidential assessment that benchmarks companies' disability inclusion programs. Using **insights from the responses of 200+ companies that together employ 9.7 million employees** across numerous industries, the Tracker examines factors that affect PwD at each stage of the employment lifecycle, from recruitment through retention to advancement.

By aggregating all participants' data, NOD identifies which practices correlate to higher talent outcomes and generates insights based on year-over-year trends.

Companies respond to questions in 6 categories:



- ✓ **Strategy**
- ✓ **Talent Sourcing**
- ✓ **People Practices**
- ✓ **Climate & Culture**
- ✓ **Talent Outcomes**
- ✓ **Workplace & Accessibility**



Excluding PwD results in \$490 billion in economic loss, so companies that measure the effectiveness of their disability employment practices with the Tracker are gaining an advantage in the competition for talent.

Felicia M. Nurmsen, Managing Director, Employer Services, NOD

Tracking Disability Inclusion Across Corporate America

Up to one out of every four adults has a disability, so whether or not they are formally counted or considered, PwD make up a significant portion of the workforce. Yet, the focus on disability inclusion is still nascent in corporate culture and attention paid to it as part of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives lags behind other segments such as gender and race.

Emerging trends in workplace practices across the Tracker include the vital role of leadership, employee resource groups (ERGs) and the interactive accommodation process. Practices such as executives or board members sharing their own disabilities; leaders supporting PwD and disability initiatives and having a Chief Accessibility Officer (CAO) – or equivalent position – correlate to positive talent outcomes and improved employee morale.

While there are indicators of progress, there are also areas of concern. For example, as the mental health crisis reaches epidemic levels, the rate of companies' commitment to supporting mental health in the workplace and the number of companies having mental health ambassadors declined.

We applaud the companies taking the Employment Tracker and congratulate those high performers who achieved our Leading Disability Employer Seal. With the majority of working-age adults with disabilities unemployed or under-employed, ignoring this talent pool is a missed opportunity — and the most innovative companies are seizing the advantage.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2023 REPORT

69% Since 2022, 69% of the talent outcomes measured in the NOD Employment Tracker (job applicants, new hires, promotions, ERG participation) have **positively improved**

34% Executives who openly share their disabilities have a 34% **higher rate of employee self-ID rates**

82% 82% of all participating companies track self-ID rates — a **10% increase from 2022**

4.2% After a two-year decline, the overall average self-ID rate for participating companies **rebounded** to 4.2% from 3.48% in 2022

79% The number of granted accommodations has **nearly doubled** since 2021 from 43% to 79%



IT ALL STARTS WITH LEADERSHIP

The importance of leadership, employee resource groups (ERGs) and interactive accommodation processes are the emerging trends in workplace practices across the Employment Tracker. Disability representation, budgetary assistance and accommodations support contributed to the trends respectively, while participation of ERGs rose from 8% to 12%.

Leadership plays the most significant role in ushering in much-needed cultural change in the workplace and talent outcomes, a consistent trend in the Tracker.

EMPLOYEE AND BUSINESS RESOURCE GROUPS WITH IMPACT

When compared to companies that did not have an executive sponsor and budget for their BRGs, ERGs or affinity groups, the Tracker found that those who do:



Improved Talent Outcome Metrics

Talent outcome metrics include the measurement of job applicants, new hires, promotions, high-potential employees, employees in management roles and turnover. Since introducing additional metrics in 2021, we've seen consistency in practices that directly impact those metrics and some emerging trends. Across 69% of talent outcome metrics, the Tracker shows positive movement year-over-year for PwD.

YEAR-OVER-YEAR TRENDS

100% ↑

Job applicants with disabilities increased 100%, from 6.5% to 13%

65% ↑

New hires of PwD increased 65%, from 6% to 10%

58% ↑

Promotions of PwD increased 58%, from 5.8% to 9.2%

26% ↑

26% increase in the **ratio of high-potential employees with disabilities**

24% ↑

24% increase in the **ratio of PwD in management roles**

Granting a higher number of accommodations positively affects employee retention. The ratio of accommodations granted nearly doubled since 2021 from 43% to 79%. Companies with an interactive accommodation process hire twice the number of PwD. The number of granted accommodations has nearly doubled since 2021 from 43% to 79%. Additionally, the number of participating ERG's rose from 8%-12%.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite growing recognition of the importance of diversity, too many DEI initiatives and policies fail to recognize and enable those with disabilities. This gap raises essential questions about the inclusivity and effectiveness of these programs.

The Tracker shows only 67% of companies track outcomes for new hires and promotions for PwD, while 91% do so for other diversity segments.

Since 80% of disabilities are non-visible, increases in self-ID rates will continue to be challenging without an authentic culture of inclusion.

Employee turnover is a challenge that all organizations face, but government data shows that PwD typically have a higher retention rate than people without disabilities. However, our data showed that while talent outcomes rose for PwD in 2022, so did turnover, from 6.6% to 7.8%. It's important to note that it is still below the 14.6% reflected in 2021.

But is the higher percentage of PwD turnover due to companies not improving conditions for PwD? Or is it that PwD have more employment options than ever before? While the shift to remote work has pushed disability employment to a record high, some employers have required employees to return to the office for work. This trend could account for the number of PwD leaving the workplace.

Nevertheless, companies can focus on practices the Tracker found correlated to higher promotion and retention rates for PwD.



RETAINING TALENT WITH DISABILITIES

Practices that Highly Correlate with Increased Retention of PwD

- + Having ERGs
- + Managers/supervisors are required to take part in annual disability training
- + The company's accommodation processes are interactive, as well as granting a higher number of accommodations when they are requested



ADVANCING TALENT WITH DISABILITIES

Practices that Highly Correlate with Increased Promotions of PwD

- + The company has a disability-specific ERG that is equipped with a budget
- + The company has a formal mentoring program specifically for PwD
- + Managers/supervisors are required to take part in annual disability training



MENTAL WELLNESS IS A PRIORITY

Mental Health conditions are a growing segment of disability. Depression rates are at record highs and the implications in the workplace are critical — whether or not employees have self-identified as having a disability.

Mental health questions were introduced into the Employment Tracker in 2022 and expanded in 2023. Therefore, the direct data impact on talent outcomes isn't yet definitive. But across practices, those with the highest correlations with increased mental health and well-being outcomes center around training and education.

A culture of support is critical to tackling the issue. While there was an increase in senior leaders promoting mental health support internally, there appeared to be a decrease in promoting it externally. Also declining was the number of companies having a mental health ambassador.



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The Bottom Line:

A Culture of Inclusion Benefits Every Employee

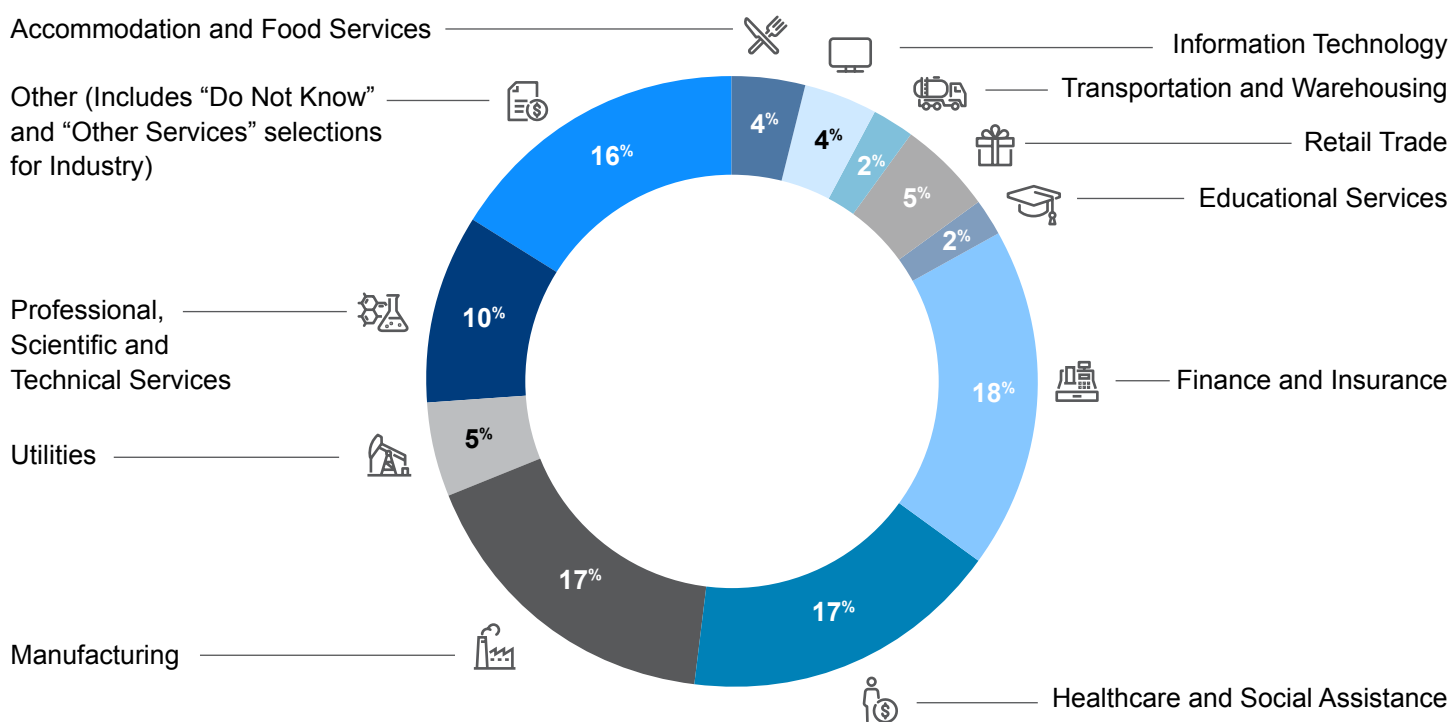
Every talent metric on the Tracker, including self-ID, improved with leadership buy-in and participation. The data indicates building a culture of trust and a commitment to psychological safety improves the experience for all employees — with and without disabilities. While progress has been made, much still needs to be done to make PwD comfortable disclosing their disabilities at work.

This report serves as a powerful tool to drive corporate disability inclusion efforts. By reviewing the best practices and taking action based on these insights, companies can create an environment where PwD feel valued, empowered and fully integrated into their organizations.

“ We are incredibly appreciative of the participating companies whose feedback helps us provide data and invaluable insights. We share with them the mission to advance PwD in work and in life.
Carol Glazer, President, NOD

WHO TAKES THE TRACKER?

226 participating companies employing 9.7 million employees, representing diverse industries:



*Rounding may account for variation in totals exceeding 100%

About the NOD Employment Tracker™

The NOD Employment Tracker benchmarks organizations of any size in six disability and veterans' inclusion focus areas, including strategy, talent outcome metrics, climate and culture, talent sourcing, people practices and workplace tools and accessibility. All participating companies receive a Tracker Scorecard to develop plans and priorities for improving employment practices and policies. The [2024 Employment Tracker](#) will open in Fall 2023; completing the Tracker is required to qualify for the NOD Leading Disability Employer Seal and the [2024 Fair360 Top 50](#). To learn more, visit nod.org/tracker.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON **DISABILITY**

The National Organization on Disability (NOD) is a private, non-profit organization that seeks to increase employment opportunities for the 60% of working-age Americans with disabilities who are not employed. To achieve this goal, NOD offers a suite of employment solutions, tailored to anticipate, and meet leading companies' workforce needs. NOD has helped some of the world's most recognized brands be more competitive in today's global economy by building or enriching their disability inclusion programs. For more information about NOD and how its portfolio of professional services, Leadership Council and Employment Tracker™ can help your business, visit www.NOD.org.

FAIR360

Fair360's mission is to bring education and clarity to the business benefits of diversity. It is a prominent diversity, equity and inclusion publication as well as a source of thought leadership and industry analysis. It is a valuable resource for companies aiming to be the change they want to see.

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Contact us: info@nod.org