BENTLEY UNIVERSITY

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Inclusion for Disability, Mental Health, and Wellbeing in the Workplace

A Curated Research Report

Prepared by The Center for Women and Business at Bentley University

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About The CWB

The Gloria Cordes Larson Center for Women and Business (CWB) at Bentley University creates more inclusive and equitable workplace cultures where all employees thrive and succeed. We partner with organizations to help them create and nurture more inclusive, equitable, and diverse workplaces.

- We design and deliver innovative, transformative programs, training, and tools to help organizations create inclusive cultures.

- Our interactive, customized programs and curated research inform and empower people and organizations to make meaningful, positive change in their organizations.

- Our work is informed by our experience with hundreds of organizations, our industry research, and Bentley's academic and business expertise.

CWB facilitators lead hundreds of sessions with businesses worldwide, providing knowledge and tools to foster inclusive organizations. Our dynamic programs focusing on workplace inclusion range from strategic sessions for senior leaders to hands-on workshops for emerging professionals. Topics include:

- Corporate Culture, Unconscious Bias, and Inclusive Leadership

- Allyship Across Difference

- Building Confidence and Overcoming

- Unseen Barriers

- The Role of Brave Dialogues

- Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks

- The Impact of Intersectionality

- Authentic Leadership and Team Development

- Effective Negotiations

- Taking Employee Resource Groups to the Next Level

About This Report

Inclusion for employees with disabilities, including those with mental health challenges, is becoming a priority at Fortune 500 companies, start-ups, non-profits, and academic institutions. The trend is unsurprising given that more than a quarter of all people in the U.S. have a disability and that organizations leading in disability inclusion are able to leverage a larger talent pool and create new avenues for innovation and revenue generation.[1, 2]

In this report, we examine some of the reasons businesses often fail to leverage the talents of workers with disabilities, and we provide solutions to overcome barriers. We explore the challenge of navigating work with an invisible disability since about 60 percent are unseen (and often involve mental health).[3] People also hide or cover their disabilities, chiefly due to fear and stigma.

We discuss the significant role younger workers are playing in changing attitudes and approaches toward disability in the workplace, noting that up to 75 percent of Generation Z workers have left jobs at least partly because of mental health.[4] Related to this, we delve into the views of senior executives versus their employees; more than two thirds of leaders believe their technological arrangements and cultures are supportive of disabled employees, yet only 41 percent of those with disabilities agree.[5]

Research indicates that people with disabilities face discrimination in the workplace. The report explores topics such as:

- Ableism, which can be subtle and take a variety of forms

- Audism, which impacts those with hearing disabilities

- Wage gaps, which persist despite the passage of legislation prohibiting pay discrimination over 30 years ago[6]

- The pandemic's heightened effects for people with disabilities

We also delve into unique experiences based on intersecting identities.

- Women and mothers face significant mental health pressures, with Black, Hispanic, and single mothers being impacted the most.[7]

- People who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) confront long-term structural inequalities that impact mental health.[8]

- Disabled people who identify as LGBTQ+ report higher rates of unemployment than others.

RUDERMAN
FAMILY FOUNDATION

The report provides extensive recommendations to help organizations, leaders, and allies nurture disability inclusion. We include detailed sections on:

- Expanding the scope of accommodations, including mental health benefits

- Addressing unique needs for people of color who are disabled

- Mainstreaming universal design

- Creating transparency and reducing stigma

- Using metrics to measure success and ensure accountability

- Leveraging employee resource groups (ERGs)

- Adopting new strategies to recruit and retain employees with disabilities

- Practicing everyday allyship

- Becoming knowledgeable about language choice

- Addressing the role of artificial intelligence (AI)

Throughout the report, we spotlight specific organizational initiatives and best practices, and we include interviews with agents for change.

Readers will find a robust appendix containing learning resources and a glossary at the end of the report.

To write this report, we reviewed 180 sources, including academic and industry research, advocacy publications, and media coverage. We also interviewed thought leaders, employees, and executives engaged in disability inclusion to gain context and insight. Although most data reflects U.S. research and experiences, international sources are referenced as appropriate.

The report uses the terms BIPOC, people of color, Black, white, Asian American, Hispanic and Latinx in ways that accurately reflect the original research and literature we cite. However, whenever possible we use the term BIPOC to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African American) people have.[9] BIPOC—Black, Indigenous, and People of Color—centers the experiences of all people of color within a U.S. context.

The Disability Community is the Largest Minority Group in the World

The disability community is often described as "the largest minority group in the world," comprising around 10 percent of the world's population, or 650 million people.[10,11] Within the U.S., although data varies slightly, sources such as the *Centers for Disease Control (CDC)* and *Accenture* concur that about 26 percent of adults have a disability.[12,13]

Research demonstrates that companies embracing disability inclusion can gain access to new talent pools and reap extensive rewards related to innovation and profitability, yet only 31 percent of people with disabilities in the U.S. are employed compared to 75 percent of people without disabilities.[14,15,16]

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and Disability:IN identify three primary reasons that companies don't leverage the talents of individuals with disabilities:[17]

- They lack understanding of the scope of the available talent pool.

- They lack understanding of the potential benefits people with disabilities bring to the workplace.

- They hold misconceptions about the cost versus the return on investment for disability inclusion.

This report provides insights and strategies to help overcome these factors, with particular emphasis on the unique experiences of employees with disabilities and the subtle discrimination they face, along with interventions that leaders, organizations, and allies can take to make a difference.

Disability Inclusion is Worth the Investment

Accenture research indicates that companies that have improved their inclusion of persons with disabilities over time are four times more likely than others to have total shareholder returns that outperform those of their peer group.[21]

Data shows that organizations working actively to employ and support workers with disabilities outperform peers across an array of metrics:

- Leading employers are, on average, twice as likely to generate higher shareholder returns and their products and services going to market tend to be more inclusive.[18,19]

- Voluntary turnover rates decrease with disability inclusion, in turn driving down costs associated with hiring and training new employees.[20]

Figure 1:
Health care costs are unaffordable for many[27]

33.58%

66.42%

■ Agree ■ Disagree
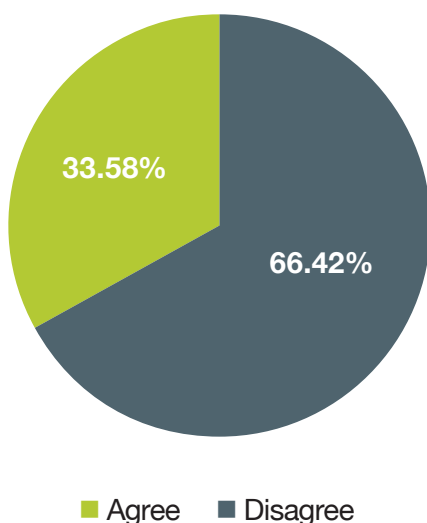
Despite the demonstrable bottom-line benefits that accrue from disability inclusion, mental health issues remain costly to employees, individual businesses, and the economy.

- *Catalyst* estimates that depression is responsible for approximately 200 million lost workdays each year in the U.S.[22]

- *Gallup* finds that "checked out" employees —often the result of stress—cost companies $450 to $550 billion in lost productivity every year.[23]

- The *World Health Organization* estimates that mental health issues cost the global economy approximately one trillion U.S. dollars per year in lost productivity.[24]

- 60 percent of employees pay for mental health care out-of-pocket despite being insured through their employer, and one in three say health care costs are unaffordable for themselves or their family.[25,26] Please see (Figure 1).

One study examined the financial impact of chronic physical and mental health problems among employees and ranked the most costly health conditions, including direct and indirect costs. In order, they were depression, obesity, arthritis, back and neck pain, and anxiety.[28] To draw their conclusions, researchers considered the amount of money businesses spent on medical and pharmacy costs for employees along with employees' self-reported absenteeism and lost productivity.

Most Disabilities are Invisible

About 62 percent of employee disabilities are not seen.[29] These can include autism spectrum disorder, diabetes, ADHD, dyslexia, learning differences, memory issues, chronic pain or fatigue, and more.

Invisible disabilities are often related to mental health.

- Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated mental health issues, the *World Health Organization* estimated that 264 million people worldwide were impacted by anxiety and depression.[30]

- The *American Psychological Association* reports that three in four adults regularly feel stressed, and Lyra reports that 40 percent of full-time U.S. employees are either burned out or close to it.[31]

- While numerous external factors impact employee mental health, leading risks within the workplace include:[32]

  - Inadequate health and safety policies

  - Poor communication and management practices

- Limited participation in decision-making or low control over one's area of work

- Inadequate employee support

- Inflexible working hours

- Unclear tasks or organizational objectives

"For every person you have identified as having a visible disability, you've seen at least three more people with a hidden disability. You also can't assume that a person with a visible disability isn't additionally challenged with a hidden disability. Though I use a wheelchair, my Type One diabetes status is my most significant disability challenge."[33] *Disability advocate Sheri Byrne-Haber*

Employees Hide Their Disabilities Due to Fear and Stigma

A significant majority of employees and leaders with a disability—76 percent and 80 percent respectively —are not fully transparent about it at work. Common reasons for covering include fear, stigma, concern about misperceptions, denial, and lack of awareness.[34] *Harvard Business Review* reports that people with disabilities carry the inordinate burden of needing to "deliberately decide when, whether, and with whom to share their disability status."[35]

When leaders choose not to disclose, they deny their employees the value of positive role models who can catalyze change and mentor others, which only perpetuates issues like stigma and fear.[37]

While people who hide their disabilities at work are less happy and more likely to feel nervous, those who choose to disclose are more than twice as likely to feel regularly happy at work and significantly less likely to feel nervous, anxious, or isolated.[38] Accenture Managing Director Laurie Henneborn writes, "Our research found that employees who do disclose their disability at work are 30 percent more engaged— in terms of career satisfaction and aspirations, confidence, and a sense of belonging—than those who don't."[39]

> **"If you are asked if you have a disability on a job application, it's hard to check the 'yes' box** because you don't want to be treated differently.[41] And HIPAA (a federal regulation designed to protect patient confidentiality) makes honest conversations difficult to have." *Gene Lofton, former Global Lead for Biogen's disability ERG.*

> **"Fear is a major reason why people with disabilities — invisible or otherwise — don't disclose them,"** writes Peg Rosen for Understood.org. This includes fear of opening themselves up to discrimination, fear of being identified purely by their disability, fear that co-workers won't believe them, and fear that they won't get hired or promoted.[36]

> **Managers can help people choose to disclose** by providing signals of support, getting to know their employee better, discussing services and support, demonstrating that they are an ally for disability, and by actively participating in a disability ERG.[40]

Younger Workers Expect More from Employers

McKinsey reports that 50 percent of millennials and 75 percent of Gen Z respondents have actually left jobs at least partly because of mental health.[50] *Benefit News* concludes that 71 percent of Gen Z and 59 percent of millennial employees have reported a mental health issue during the pandemic, compared to 36 percent of Gen X and 22 percent of baby boomers.[51]

Current data indicates that employees are more likely to seek help with stress, anxiety, and depression than they were as recently as five years ago.[42] *McKinsey* reports that as many as 91 percent of employees believe their employers should care about their emotional health and 85 percent feel that behavioral health benefits are important in evaluating a new job.[43]

The New York Times asserts that younger generations have grown up "knowing the A.D.A. (Americans with Disabilities Act) as a birthright."[44] As a result, they are a galvanizing force behind changing attitudes and behaviors.

Research among college students provides a good indicator of the attitude and behavior shifts taking place. The *American College Health Association* finds that almost one in four college students—an increase from one in ten in 2000—report having had a diagnosis of depression.[45]

Research aligns with these findings. Bentley University Associate Professor Danielle Hartigan found that young employees entering the workforce—in particular, recent college graduates—need additional mental health services and support. Her research indicates that 90 percent of students believe workplace mental health resources are important for employee satisfaction and retention, and yet:

- Adults aged 18-25, with the highest prevalence of mental illness, are the least likely to receive services.[46,47]

- 83 percent of students believe there is still stigma surrounding mental health in the workplace.[48]

- Only 19 percent of students strongly agree that they themselves are prepared to address mental health and emotional wellbeing in the workplace.[49]

Employers can best support the mental and emotional wellbeing of employees entering the workforce by encouraging connection, sharing resources, and training managers so they are better equipped to advocate for and help their employees.[52]

Employers and Employees Don't Always Agree

While senior executives are awakening to the notion of disability and mental health inclusion, there are worrisome gaps in perceptions between leaders and their employees. Data from the *World Health Organization* and other sources finds that:

- While over two thirds of leaders believe their technological arrangements and cultures are supportive, just 41 percent of employees with disabilities agree.[53]

- Only 20 percent of employees with a disability feel their organization is fully committed to supporting them, and the bigger the company, the less likely employees are to think their employer is doing enough for mental health.[54]

- 69 percent of CEOs say they're accepting of emotional and mental health issues in the workplace, while only 35 percent of employees believe this is true.[55] See (Figure 2).

Figure 2: CEOs and employees hold differing perspectives on mental health acceptance in the workplace [56,57]

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

- ■ Strongly agree
- ■ Somewhat agree
- ■ Disagree somewhat
- ■ Strongly disagree

CEO: As a business leader, I am more accepting of emotional and mental health issues now than in the past

69%	28%	3% 1%

Employee: My workplace is more accepting of emotional and mental health issues than in the past

35%	44%	14%	7%

Figure 3: Why leaders hesitate to discuss mental health with their teams [60,61]

Concern it will impact my credibility as a leader
56%

Employees will lose confidence
44%

Share price or investor confidence might be impacted
34%

I have nothing to say
15%

I've never thought about it
14%

I don't have emotional or mental health issues to discuss
13%

I don't feel qualified to discuss the issues
13%

Nothing holds me back
8%
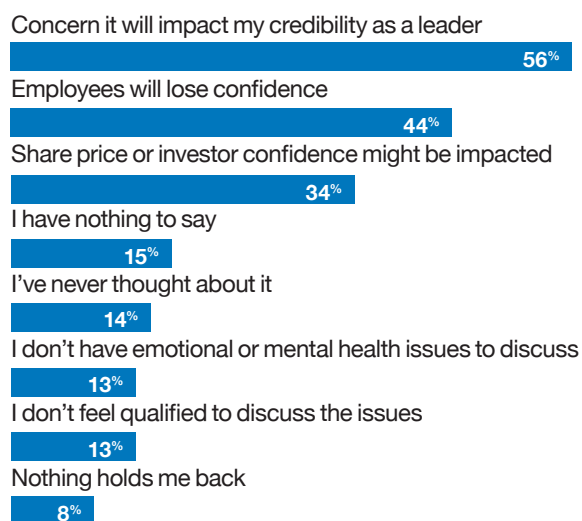
More than half of CEOs believe talking about their own mental health makes them a better leader, yet they hold back largely because of concerns it will impact their credibility and employee confidence in them (Figure 3).[58] When employees with disabilities feel less sure that their talents are being utilized, they are less likely to thrive.[59] If bosses aren't speaking out about inclusion, if accommodations aren't being made, and if employees don't feel they can raise concerns about how they're treated, then secrecy reigns and employees and organizations can't reach their potential.

COVID-19 has Exacerbated Disability and Mental Health Challenges

Despite reluctance by some employers to hire disabled people to work remotely, 2020's shift to telecommuting offered new opportunities for businesses to recruit job seekers with disabilities.[63] With the removal of barriers to working at home, those with disabilities who face transportation, assistive technology, and other obstacles more easily addressed at home were better positioned to find employment suited to their experience and knowledge.

An abundance of data indicates that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted workers with disabilities and negatively affected the mental health of a majority of workers.

SHRM concludes that one in five people with disabilities, compared to one in seven among other employees, lost their jobs in the early stages of the pandemic.[62] Why? People with disabilities are often the last to be hired, making them more vulnerable to layoffs. Additionally, many disabled people work in retail and hospitality, where most jobs were lost. And finally, some employers are reluctant to hire disabled people to work remotely or fear that providing accommodations for work, whether onsite or at home, will be too expensive.

Numerous sources, including The *Kaiser Family Foundation*, The *Pew Research Center,* and virtual health service providers, have documented the negative mental health impacts of COVID-19 on a majority of workers.

- 70 percent of employees have felt more stress due to the pandemic than ever before in their professional careers.[64]

- 94 percent of CEOs have received mental health support for themselves during the pandemic.[65]

- 83 percent of workers have "felt drained" from their work, reporting exhaustion and burnout.

In a study conducted by Mental Health America, 60 percent of respondents said their supervisor was not providing emotional support to help them manage their stress during the pandemic.[66] This is important, since research also demonstrates that talking to a supervisor to change stressful things about work is strongly correlated with the healthiest overall workplace health scores.[67] "Open and honest discussion between managers and employees about job stressors is one important area of focus for employers concerned about employee mental health and healthy work environments."

Employees with Disabilities Feel Less Included at Work

An abundance of data indicates that employees with disabilities have less favorable workplace experiences than their non-disabled peers, and some research indicates that disability bias is more pronounced than bias related to gender, race, or sexual orientation.[68]

- Even when employees with disabilities believe their organizations are working to be inclusive, they experience bias. In a recent *Deloitte* study,54 percent of those with disabilities said that they experience workplace bias at least once a month, compared to 44 percent of African Americans and Asians, 42 percent of all women, and 38 percent of all men.[69]

- 90 percent of global corporations report being committed to diversity and inclusion efforts, but only four percent say they have a disability inclusion focus.[70]

Global Disability Inclusion Founder Meg O'Connell says disability inclusion is about two concepts: *access and belonging.*[73] "The A.D.A, passed in 1990, helped remove physical barriers to all public spaces, ensuring access. Today, access also applies to digital technology. Belonging is emotive. It is when someone feels they are part of the team, they are treated with respect, and valued for their contributions. Belonging means you feel confident your opinions and views will be heard and appreciated, and you are not afraid to speak up and be a member of the team."

Figure 4: People with disabilities perceive more disability bias [71, 72]

People without disabilities

13%

People with a disability

24%

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%
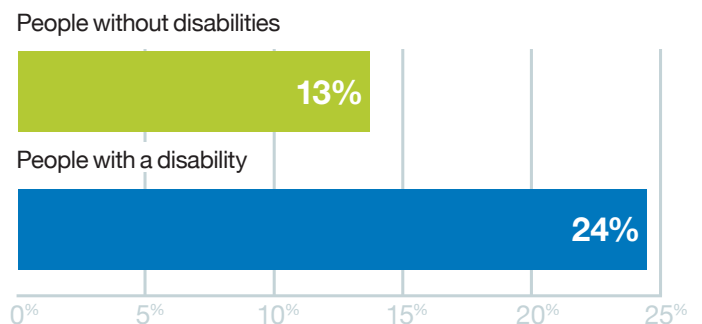
Women and Mothers Face a Mental Health Crisis

Nearly one million mothers left the workforce during the pandemic due to inordinate pressures and negative mental health impacts.[74] Black, Hispanic, and single mothers were the hardest hit. Headlines have underscored the emotional toll of the pandemic for mothers: "Working Moms Are Not Okay," " Pandemic triples anxiety and depression symptoms In new mothers," and "Working moms are reaching the breaking point."

Women were approximately 1.5 times more likely than men to report mental health challenges over the past year, and the pandemic's disproportionate emotional toll on women in the workplace caused one in four senior-level women to consider downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce.[75]

The impacts of 2020 could result in "long-term backsliding on gender equity in the workplace," according to *The New York Times*. An economist at the *Center for American Progress* notes, "Before the pandemic hit, for the first time ever for a couple of months we had more women employed than men. Now we are back to late 1980s levels of women in the labor force. The long-term ramifications include a broken pipeline for high level jobs."[76]

Stressors on mothers are magnified by a number of intersecting issues, including poverty, race, having children with special needs, and being a single parent, according to University of Oregon Professor Philip Fisher who runs an ongoing nationally representative survey on the impact of the pandemic on families with young children.[77,78]

The Intersections of Race and Disability Heighten Discrimination

BIPOC Americans with disabilities face unique systemic challenges as a result of their intersecting identities.[79] The *National Disability Institute* notes that "Centuries of exclusive practices in the United States, such as redlining and employment discrimination, have resulted in a society where people of color with disabilities, particularly BIPOC and the Latinx community, are at a particular disadvantage financially." Indeed, groups with the highest poverty rates are Black and Indigenous individuals with disabilities (Figure 5).

Structural racial inequalities appear to play an intersectional role in mental health.[82] During the pandemic, for example, Black and Latinx caregivers with young children have experienced more consistent and ongoing stress in meeting families' basic needs than white caregivers with similar income levels. These same racial and ethnic groups have also faced greater job loss, reduced access to quality distance learning, and inferior health care compared to white households.

Diversability CEO and Founder Tiffany Yu provides insight on how race and disability intersect to impact her lived experience: "I can't think of many Asian activists for disabilities.In fact, in my disability work I never think about my race because we have been socialized to downplay it. Growing up I wouldn't say I was Asian, I would say I am American. I have the highest level of understanding of my disability because I have been doing this work for 12 years, but I don't have the same understanding of my Asian identity because I have downplayed it for so long."[85]

"The histories of ableism and racism are co-dependent and intertwined...both disabledness and abledness are defined based on proximity to and approximation of whiteness…what that means is that to be defined as fully nondisabled requires being white," writes activist Lydia X. Z. Brown.[83]

Figure 5: Non-Hispanic Black and Indigenous workers with disabilities experience more poverty[80, 81]

	NH White	NH Black	Latinx	Indigenous	All
With Disability	23%	36%	28%	34%	26%
No Disability	8%	17%	15%	20%	11%

■ With Disability   ■ No Disability
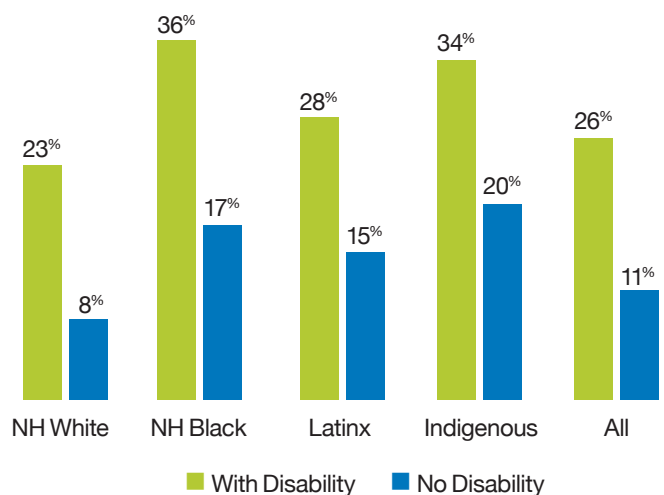
Biases often occur at the intersections of disability, race, gender, and other identities.[84] Case in point: a popular AI (artificial intelligence) software that attempts to predict how a candidate will perform on the job by analyzing factors on display in their job interview such as gestures, tone, and cadence. *Accenture* reports that "This software has been called out by experts as dangerously biased against persons with disabilities, who might present with a range of characteristics that would not hinder their work performance but could affect how their potential is scored." With bias imbedded in facial recognition technology, accuracy rates are the lowest for women, Black individuals, and those 18-30 years old.

Black Employees Face Greater Stigma Related to Mental Health

In the U.S., an ongoing reckoning with racial injustice —fueled by the murders of George Floyd and others, national political strife, and a pandemic—has exacerbated stress dramatically for Black employees.

The *Kaiser Family Foundation* reports that during this period half of Black employees struggled with their mental health yet fewer than five percent sought care. At least one study found that over 60 percent of Black people think poor mental health is a sign of weakness.[86]

One social worker reported that in the Black community, people often don't seek treatment because there is a lack of trust. Their trauma is so deep-seated that they don't feel seen and heard by other people, thus it's ingrained in them not to discuss their problems.[87] The dilemma is that "At work, people are suffering and going to work and having mental health issues and not dealing with them."

"Black employees feel silenced because of fear and stigma around discussing their mental health," says Patrick Roland, a licensed social worker for OnlineTherapy.com.[88] "When you don't feel seen and understood by your country at large, you don't get help. There's a cultural aversion to it along with the stigma, fear, rage and the hurt of what's going on right now." Employers need to create space for dialogue that empowers employees to seek help and allows them to amplify their voices and share their stories.

LGBTQ+ Individuals with Disabilities Confront Barriers on Multiple Fronts

Current and reliable data related to the intersections of gender identity or sexual expression and disability is limited, but what is available indicates that LGBTQ+ individuals who have a disability face heightened discrimination across society and within the LGBTQ+ community. Research indicates that:

- People with disabilities who also identify as LGBTQ+ report much higher rates of unemployment. One study concludes that 36 percent of those living at the intersection of LGBTQ+ and disability are employed compared to approximately 77 percent of LGBTQ+ individuals without disabilities.[89]

- Transgender individuals with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to experience psychological distress than those who identify as trans who do not have disabilities.[90]

- *Forbes* reports that accessibility issues are often present in gay bars, parties, parades, protests, and rallies, presenting obstacles for people with physical disabilities or sensory sensitivities.[91] During a time when inclusion is a primary pillar of Pride, people with disabilities are still excluded from discussions and celebrations of sexual and gender diversity.

Advocate Dylan Orr notes that "LGBTQ+ people with disabilities…are more likely to be the subjects of stigma and discrimination, more likely to be unemployed, more likely to be living in poverty, more likely to be homeless, be bullied, and face barriers to access in other areas of life—particularly people of color within those populations."[92]

Not only is ableism evident across society, it's also widespread within the LGBTQ+ community. One in four LGBTQ+ disabled people whose activities are limited a lot because of a health problem or disability have experienced discrimination or poor treatment from others in their local LGBTQ+ community because of their disability.

"If you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community you need to be aware that other people's lives and experiences may be very different to your own, especially if they suffer multiple levels of discrimination due to other elements of their identity, such as disability. Your role as an ally is to educate yourself so you are equipped to speak out against ableism. If you witness people making ableist or negative comments, challenge it whenever it's safe to do so. If you see it online, report it."[93]

Disability rights activist
Nish Vasco-Knight

Young Adults with Autism Face Employment Roadblocks

Playbook, **Autism@Work's learningand action resource, emphasizes the need to collaborate with external partners** in order to successfully plan, launch, and sustain inclusion programs.[96] External partners can include community agencies, vendors, schools, and colleges. These organizations can provide resources, services, and important connections. (Please see educational resources on pages 35-36 for additional recommendations.)

Many individuals with autism possess capabilities businesses need.[94] Despite this, research from the University of Washington indicates that young adults with autism generally face significantly more barriers in obtaining and sustaining employment than all other groups of young adults with disabilities.As a result, this community faces exceptionally high unemployment rates.

Numerous companies have initiated inclusive hiring practices in the neurodiversity space, with particular success related to employees with autism. The Autism@Work Roundtable—comprised of Microsoft, EY, JP Morgan Chase, SAP, and the University of Washington—focuses specifically on recruiting neurodiverse employees and sharing their learnings with others. Including members of the autistic and neurodiverse community in planning and implementation is integral to the success of any organization's program.

The *World Health Organization* reports that "Entering the job market can be particularly challenging for people with autism.**[95] Thirty-five percent of autistic adults have attended and graduated from college, but the unemployment rate for autistic graduates is 85 percent."

Ableism Takes a Variety of Forms and Can be Subtle

Access Living defines ableism as "the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior."[97] The concept is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require fixing and it defines them by their disability. Like racism or sexism, ableism classifies entire communities of people as "less than" and includes harmful stereotypes.

Ableism can take a variety of forms from overt to subtle. Consider just a few:

- Lack of compliance with A.D.A. regulations

- Failing to incorporate accessibility into building designs or websites

- Mocking people with disabilities

- Choosing inaccessible meeting venues

- Framing disabilities as tragic or inspirational in media coverage

- Wearing scented products in a scent-free environment

- Questioning if someone is really disabled

Specific micro-aggressions can include comments such as:

- That's so lame.

- Are you off your meds?

- He's psycho.

- I don't think of you as disabled.

- She's crazy.

To recognize and pre-empt ableism, consider the following strategies:

- Believe people when they disclose a disability.

- Listen to people when they request an accommodation.

- Don't assume you know what someone needs.

- Never touch a person with a disability or their mobility equipment without consent.

- Don't speak on behalf of someone with a disability unless they explicitly ask you to.

- Hold respectful, transparent workplace discussions about disability.

- Incorporate accessibility into meeting and event planning.[98]

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Workers Face Audism

Audism is defined as discrimination against those who are deaf or hard of hearing.[99] Employees who are deaf or hard of hearing confront audism every day, in the form of communication barriers, discrimination, or hostile attitudes.

Deafness in the workplace leads to a communication barrier and can create a constant battle to be understood.[100] Mistakes made by those with hearing disabilities are likely to be attributed to their inability to hear. Additionally, deaf job applicants have to work harder to compete in the application and interview process. If they use sign language, they must rely on language interpreters to facilitate communication between themselves and their interviewer, and sometimes interviewers fail to provide interpreters, choosing just to write back and forth during interviews. All of this places the job candidate at a significant disadvantage compared to other applicants.

"We want our clients with disabilities to know that when they go to a Fidelity branch, maybe in a wheelchair or if they are hard of hearing or blind, that their experience is going to be a good one.[101] We want the person to say, 'Oh my gosh, Fidelity was expecting me and they know how I need to interact with them.' A good example is that anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing can have a meeting or phone call that includes an American Sign Language (ASL) live interpreter at the push of a button, rather than having to schedule the assistance weeks in advance. That differentiates us for people who happen to be deaf." Fidelity Vice President of Customer Accessibility Hale Pulsifer

A Pay Gap Persists for People with Disabilities

The *A.D.A.* prohibits most employers from discriminating against a qualified individual on the basis of disability in regard to employee compensation.[102] Despite this, pay gaps persist for individuals with disabilities, even 30 years after the law's passage.

Understanding pay discrimination requires a careful look at the data. Among people working similar jobs and schedules, median earnings for workers with disabilities are either close to or the same as earnings for those without disabilities. But a number of factors conflate the data. Take age. According to the *U.S. Census Bureau,* "For most occupations, the median age of workers with a disability exceeds that of workers with no disability.[103] Since earnings tend to increase with age, this average age difference also tends to inflate the overall median earnings of workers with a disability relative to those with no disability." Consider additional factors:

- **The type of disability** – Those with significant disabilities are more likely to be underemployed, meaning that they are not employed to the fullest level of their talent and ability.[104]

- **Full-time vs part-time status** – Workers with disabilities are less likely to work year-round or full-time.[105]

- **A.D.A. gaps** – The law does not require employers to recruit, hire, or promote people with disabilities.

Figure 6: People with disabilities are much less likely to be employed[107]

Population by disability status

- ■ Disability
- ■ No Disability
- ■ Not in Workforce
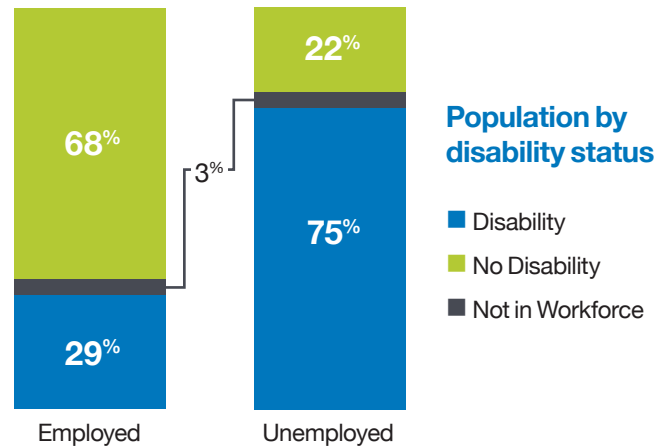
The *U.S. Census Bureau* reports that in nearly every occupation, workers with a disability are less likely to work full-time, year-round.[106] Thus, including all workers regardless of their schedules or occupation increases the overall earnings gap, resulting in workers with a disability earning 66 cents for every dollar those without a disability earn.

How Organizations, Leaders, and Allies Can Nurture Disability Inclusion

Today's workforce expects organizations to create inclusive environments for all workers, including those with disabilities. Many strategies utilized for other underrepresented groups can be useful for disability inclusion, yet there are interventions unique to this community of employees as well.

Expand the Scope of Accommodations for Disabilities

Employers must commit to expanding the scope of accommodations in their workplaces. Research demonstrates the ample direct and indirect benefits of doing so.[108] Consider just a few:

- Accommodations allow businesses to retain valued employees.

- Accommodations increase employee productivity.

- Accommodations eliminate costs involved in training new employees.

- Accommodations ultimately improve interactions with co-workers.

- Accommodations increase overall workplace morale.

- Accommodations increase overall productivity.

A recent survey found that 56 percent of accommodations for disabilities cost absolutely nothing.[109] Little more than a third require a one-time cost, and only four percent of accommodations result in an ongoing, annual cost. Of those accommodations that do have a one-time cost, the median one-time expenditure is about $500.

Most accommodations cost little or nothing to implement.[110] In one office, a worker was limited in using their hands and therefore in manipulating their computer's mouse. The employer purchased a foot mouse, speech to text software, and a foot mat at a cost of $300. At another organization, a worker who was sensitive to cold suffered from headaches and neck pains. For only $115, their employer turned off one AC vent and diffused another vent near the person's work area.

To learn more about how to introduce accommodations in the workplace, please see resources in the appendix, pages 35-36.

Total Brain reports that workers want employers to offer these benefits to support workplace stress:[116]

52% Mental health PTO
(58 percent of women)

Health insurance with mental health benefits **40%**

14% Digital mental health assessment/training tools

Access to mental health support groups **27%**

36% Employee assistance programs

Stress management training **34%**

Expand Mental Health Benefits and Tailor Them for Underrepresented Groups

Good mental health benefits are worth the investment. *The Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* found that about 86 percent of employees experienced improved work performance and lower rates of absenteeism after receiving treatment for depression.[111,112] *Harvard Business Review* reports that "$4 is returned to the economy for every $1 spent caring for people with mental health issues."

The challenges of 2020 forced organizations to recognize that many existing care mechanisms fall short in supporting mental health. Traditional EAPs, for instance, provide relatively weak networks focused on mild issues and therefore can't keep up with current needs, thus some companies are replacing them with benefits that provide easier access to quality care.[113]

Mental health care provider Lyra recommends that, going forward, businesses "focus more deeply on mental health care and support that addresses the needs of Black employees, as well as other underrepresented employee groups, including Indigenous people, people of color, LGBTQ+ employees, parents, and other family caregivers."[114] This might mean finding providers who are trained to treat race-based stress and trauma.

"Most large employers offer mental health benefits via an employee assistance program (EAP), but these programs are often ill-suited to BIPOC communities' specific needs.[115] While rates of mental illness among Black Americans are comparable to other racial groups, this community faces a higher prevalence of severe symptoms that result in disability." *Huston-Tillotson Associate Professor of Psychology Andrea Holman and Lyra Health Clinical Director for Partnerships Joe Grasso.*

More employers are offering on-site mental health support than ever before. The Business Group on Health found that one third of employers with more than 5,000 employees planned to offer on-site behavioral health counseling in 2020, a large increase from the one fifth that did so only two years before.[121]

Organizations offer a variety of resources to support employee mental health and wellbeing:

- *EY* provides employees with free access to apps for building emotional resilience, one-on-one or group counseling, and daily drop-in sessions where employees can learn tips for managing anxiety, stress, and social isolation.[117]

- *PwC* has provided access to well-being coaches throughout the pandemic.[118]

- The *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* distributes a comprehensive toolkit to help leaders support their staff during a national emergency.[119]

- Still other organizations offer their employees apps like Calm and Headspace, or provide access to online providers like Talkspace, BetterHelp, and Ginger.[120]

Mainstream Universal Design

Through the use of universal design (also called inclusive design), organizations can embed accessibility and the knowledge of their employees with disabilities into their products and services from design through development and launch.[122] Consider these examples:

- Microsoft Teams makes lip-reading easier by blurring backgrounds to remove distractions on video calls.

- Spotify changed the color, text formatting, and size of its well-recognized green buttons to make the user-interface more accessible.

- Procter & Gamble created audio-described advertising spots.

- Most Netflix media has audio-descriptive narration.

"As disability awareness increases, businesses must adapt to the idea that every one of us is different and may require different needs in the workplace.[123] Our differences open our eyes to new ways of thinking and solving problems and allow us to connect with our customers in a way that leaves them feeling a genuine sense of connection." *Kendra Scott, Founder and CEO of Kendra Scott LLC.*

> **"We want to make sure that, from the very beginning, employees are aware our culture supports them** to thrive and really focus on mental health and mental well-being," asserts a Genentech and Roche benefits manager.[127]

Create Transparency and Reduce Stigma

Most of the data available about workplace disability transparency involves mental health. Senior executives report that discussions about mental health issues are becoming more frequent and transparent, and that such conversations are often embedded in routine meetings.[124]

At Biogen,the move to create transparency and reduce stigma includes a Disability Summit.[125] The firm invites other companies to attend and share best practices, successes, and challenges related to disability inclusion.

SAP has also made significant strides. One executivereports that a team of representatives from across multiple areas of the business—including the diversity and inclusion officer and chief medical officer—meets regularly to discuss the company's mental health initiatives.[126] "It's a diversity and inclusion conversation," he says. "It's a product conversation, it's a customer conversation, it's an employee-engagement conversation, it's a leadership conversation, it's a brand conversation. It's all of those conversations together."

Still other companies—including Genentech, Starbucks, Brown Brothers Harriman, and Pinterest—include virtual forums where employees from all levels of the company can share their mental health challenges. These organizations have embedded mental health awareness into organizational processes, including onboarding.

Use Metrics to Understand Needs, Measure Success, and Ensure Accountability

Multiple strategies exist to measure the mental health of employees, the success of specific wellbeing initiatives, and progress related to disability inclusion. Some organizations track a variety of metrics to gain understanding. Multiple options must be utilized in order to glean meaningful information. Consider the following:

- Tracking types of employee claims via varying sources (such as EAPs, healthcare claims, and disability claims)

- Following metrics and feedback related to turnover rates

- Monitoring job satisfaction and participation in wellness programs

- Holding one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and discussions about mental health and disability

- Issuing employee safety perception surveys for psychological safety, such as the World Health Organization Well-Being Index or the Satisfaction with Life Scale[128,129]

- Conducting employee satisfaction and engagement surveys

Employer surveys and measures of behavioral health sometimes use disparate and idiosyncratic questions that lead to ambiguous results. *McKinsey* recommends a 12-item general-health questionnaire first developed in 1970. The instrument has been widely used and extensively validated.

Consistent use of validated, reliable measures permits better comparisons across study settings and over time. This approach also gives organizations the best chance to measure progress and benchmark their mental health status against other businesses.[130]

Benchmark Progress for Broader Understanding and Accountability

Some employers take measurement to a higher level, using more sophisticated approaches. Two nationally recognized initiatives include:

The Mental Health Index: U.S. Worker Edition, co-sponsored by the National Alliance, HR Policy Alliance, and One Mind and produced by Total Brain.[132] It provides monthly findings from a sampling of U.S. workers on issues like risk for anxiety and depressive disorders, emotional awareness, and negativity. The result is an ongoing, detailed look at how mental health is evolving and where needs are the greatest.

The Disability Equality Index: Co-sponsored by Disability: IN and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), in partnership with Accenture.[133 ,134] This national benchmarking tool is used to analyze the disability practices and financial performance of 140 participating companies, allowing them to monitor success related to disability hiring, retention, accommodations, and more.

Leverage ERGs for Inclusion

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), now firmly established as critical components to diverse and inclusive organizational cultures, are particularly effective in supporting disability awareness, equity, and inclusion. *Harvard Business Review* indicates that in organizations with active ERGs, employees with disabilities are 26 percent more likely to disclose their disability to others.[136]

No one strategy to gauge employee wellbeing or the success of mental health initiatives is adequate on its own. A variety of approaches must be used. A Campbell Institute report notes that "If healthcare claims related to mental health and illness decrease, that is not necessarily a sign that programming is working and that there is less need.[131] It could mean the opposite – that employees do not feel safe seeking support for mental health and wellbeing, and therefore are choosing not to. This is why assessing employee engagement and receiving qualitative feedback in addition to the quantitative measures is critical."

A disability advocate writes that, "Recruiting goals for people with disabilities and veterans with service-related disabilities are hard to meet without disability ERGs."[137] She adds that, without ERGs fully involved, employers are less likely to find candidates with disabilities or find candidates who feel comfortable self-identifying. They are also more likely to struggle with retention issues.

"There's so much around mental health care that is unmonitored, is not evidence-based, doesn't have an end date, isn't technology-enabled, and is limited by state lines," says Jeff Brodsky, Chief Human Resources Officer at Morgan Stanley.[135] Traditional EAPs and health care plans tend to lack transparency, in many cases sharing utilization rates but little to no data measuring members' improvement or recovery with treatment.

Gloria Cordes Larson Center for Women and Business

> **"There are more disabled people in the workforce who are educated and passionate and have advocacy skills than ever before.**[140] Many of these folks at Fidelity belong to our Disability ERG, Enable. Largely because of them, there has been an awakening at Fidelity. We are changing hearts and minds. Employees see their associates who are impacted by disability, whether it's their own or whether they are a parent, caregiver, or sibling. This has helped employees with disabilities find their voice." *Fidelity Vice President of Customer Accessibility Hale Pulsifer*

Creating a disability ERG sends an explicit signal of support to people with disabilities and their allies. ERGs can help by:[138, 139]

- Raising awareness of workplace issues that affect people with disabilities

- Creating environments that are psychologically safe, allowing people to disclose their disabilities and discuss them

- Providing feedback on physical and digital accessibility issues

- Reducing unconscious bias towards people with disabilities

- Supporting other populations, such as parents of children with disabilities or veterans with service-related disabilities

- Improving inclusive hiring efforts

- Supporting career development and training

- Providing mentorship and coaching

Actively Work to Recruit People with Disabilities

Leading companies are working actively to create more equitable pathways at work, beginning with recruitment. Organizations can remove barriers in a variety of ways. A small sampling includes:[141]

- Allowing job candidates to apply via a special email and skip the first-round phone screening

- Giving candidates a practice interview and providing them with feedback

- Utilizing exercises designed to test teamwork and technical skills in place of a standard interview

Some companies—including Fidelity, Biogen, and Microsoft—provide hiring programs focused specifically on neurodiverse candidates.[142] These can include internship programs, and some are in early stages of development and testing. Biogen, for instance, created its neuro-diverse internship program only two years ago.

> **"The knowledge base and technical aptitude of individuals (with autism) can be very high, so we had to figure out why we weren't placing them.** We discovered the problem—the interview process. We changed our approach to what the process should look like. Now we work with a local group to bring candidates in for a week-long academy. We offer teamwork and technical exercises, and a lot of training. At the end of the week, we have an idea of those who will receive a job offer."[143]
> *Microsoft Chief Accessibility Officer*
> *Jenny Lay-Flurrie*

Utilize Vital Allyship Strategies

Strategies and best practices for disability inclusion have been highlighted throughout this report. Here, we include allyship recommendations for individuals and teams.

- Self-educate to learn more about peers with disabilities. Read books, watch videos, listen to podcasts, or attend ERG events in your organization.

- Believe people when they disclose a disability and listen when they request an accommodation.

- Don't assume you know what someone needs; ask them.

- Never touch a person with a disability or their mobility equipment without consent.

- Refrain from invasive questions.

- Only speak on behalf of a person with a disability if they ask you to do so.

- Amplify the voices of disabled colleagues by giving them the opportunity to speak, and affirm their contributions.

- Model vulnerability and transparency by sharing a hidden disability or a health challenge with your team.

- Mentor and sponsor people with disabilities.

- Hold forums to discuss disability issues.

- Add audio descriptions and captions to videos and on social media.

- Include accessibility requirements in your vendor agreements.[144]

- Refrain from invasive questions.

- Only speak on behalf of a person with a disability if they ask you to do so.

- Amplify the voices of disabled colleagues by giving them the opportunity to speak, and affirm their contributions.

- Model vulnerability and transparency by sharing a hidden disability or a health challenge with your team.

- Mentor and sponsor people with disabilities.

- Hold forums to discuss disability issues.

- Add audio descriptions and captions to videos and on social media.

- Include accessibility requirements in your vendor agreements.

- Provide disability inclusion training for front-line managers.

  - *McKinsey* recommends short trainings for team leaders that focus on recognizing signs of distress, and The *National Alliance on Mental Illness* recommends teaching managers to learn how to:[145,146]

    - Make employees more comfortable talking about mental health.

    - Encourage employees to seek mental health treatment when needed.

"**While there are many specific improvements disabled people need,** what we need most overall is agency and a voice.[147] Taking more decisions out of our hands, and further drowning out our voice—even if the cause is good—doesn't help us with the fundamental problem that too many of us don't have control over our own lives, or a meaningful voice in our own affairs. So be careful not to drift into a superior position with the disabled people you are 'helping.' And don't let your own urgency and ego warp your approach to disabled people and the disability community." *Writer and disability activist Andrew Pulrang.*

- Assure employees that they will not be judged or disadvantaged for seeking treatment.

- Ensure private and confidential discussions, which help build trust.

- Reward and praise an employee for proactively addressing mental health.

Language Matters

Language choice is an important consideration and a topic that any ally should educate themselves about. Through appropriate language, co-workers center the lived experience of people with disabilities rather than making them out to be their disability. People with disabilities do not share a monolithic language style, thus a good starting point can be asking a co-worker about their preferences to describe their disability. Consider the following additional information about inclusive language:

- There are two major linguistic preferences to address disability. Putting the person first, as in "person with a disability," is called people-first language. Another popular approach, known as "identity-first language," is to use the term "disabled people." Individuals often use this style because they simply prefer it or wish to celebrate disability pride. There is no unanimity on which is correct or more respectful. A suggested middle-ground is to use the two approaches interchangeably, thus acknowledging and respecting individual preferences of a profoundly diverse group of people.

- Terms such as "differently abled," "challenged," and "handi-capable" are often considered condescending. When we choose not to use the term "disability" we may be reinforcing the notion that disability is shameful or embarrassing.

- Do not use terms such as normal, healthy, or able-bodied to describe people without disabilities. Instead, use "non-disabled" or "people without visible disabilities."

- When portraying successful people with disabilities, avoid casting them as heroic or superhuman.[148] Using terms meant to inspire—such as "courageous," "brave," or "special"—can actually objectify and diminish co-workers.

"**Often, when allyship is used to discuss disability, it has not been defined or identified by disabled people.** These models of allyship are one-sided, in which the disabled person is still positioned as a charity case—inferior. Or in some cases, their differences are assimilated rather than celebrated."[149]
Disability activist and scholar Amy Gaeta

Moving Forward with Artificial Intelligence

Despite meaningful gains in workplace disability inclusion in the 31 years since the A.D.A. became law, people with disabilities continue to face striking, persistent barriers throughout society, and equity gaps remain larger for BIPOC individuals with disabilities.[150] Businesses, government, and non-profit organizations must embrace the goal of creating workplaces that are more equitable and inclusive for employees with disabilities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can provide solutions to move ahead. Designing, developing, and utilizing responsible, ethical AI can leverage the enormous talent of those with disabilities and help all workers reach their potential. With AI tools, organizations can not only better identify candidates, but can make it easier for prospective employees to find the right employer. AI can also facilitate greater engagement in the workplace and help all workers reach their potential.[151]

AI-powered advances in accessibility, including predictive text, voice and visual recognition, or speech-to-text transcription, have exciting potential to help organizations remove barriers for people with disabilities.[152] However, all AI approaches and applications—along with their underlying algorithms and data sets—must be trustworthy and bias-free in order for technology to be reliably utilized for long-term diversity and inclusion progress.

Accenture recommends four guiding principles to ensure that AI positively impacts people with disabilities:

■ **Be responsible** by emphasizing compliance, accountability, and transparency. This means assessing tools and their impact, engaging independent teams for evaluation, emphasizing open communication about various approaches, and more.

■ **Ensure accessibility** with appropriate features and functions. This might require an office of accessibility or a chief accessibility officer. It might also include evaluating vendors' AI accessibility features.

■ **Prioritize inclusion** by incorporating the lived experience of employees with disabilities and introducing debiasing techniques. This can include incentivizing talent development teams to use inclusive design approaches or assessing the risk of role displacement as a result of AI.

■ **Invest in security** on both a human and technological level. This might mean ensuring that AI does not put individual privacy at risk or increasing investment in the security of AI systems. An internal governance model may be required to attain security goals.[153]

Disability & Mental Health Glossary

Ableism: Discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior.

Accessibility: Measures utilized to ensure persons with disabilities have equal access to physical environments, transportation, information and communications, and other facilities and services.

Accommodations: An alteration of environment, curriculum format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks.

Ally (Allyship): A person who works actively to create equitable environments that affirm diversity and inclusion. The term was originally used to communicate straight allyship with LGBTQ+ communities. The term is now used more broadly and can apply to those who support and advocate for people with disabilities.

Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.): A Federal civil rights law passed in 1990 that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

Anxiety Disorder: Disorders in which anxiety (persistent feelings of apprehension, tension, or uneasiness) is the predominant symptom.

Assistive Technology: Any item, piece of equipment, or system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Individuals with ADHD are commonly described as having chronic difficulties with inattention, and/or impulsivity, and/or hyperactivity.

Audism: Discrimination or prejudice against individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Autism: A broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication.

Bias: An inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

Bipolar Disorder: Characterized by changes from one extreme mood to its polar opposite—for instance, from depression to the euphoric or grandiose state known as mania.

Cognitive Disabilities: Disabilities that affect a person's awareness and memory along with the ability to learn, process information, communicate, and make decisions.

Deafness: A hearing condition that is so severe that the individual is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.

Disability: The A.D.A defines a person with a disability in three ways: 1) An individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; 2) Someone who has a record of such an impairment; or 3) Someone who is regarded as having such an impairment.

Disability Justice: A framework co-created by Black and brown disabled people, queer and trans disabled people, and other disabled people who are marginalized.

Disability Rights: Using the law and policy as means of effecting change for disabled people in society.

Discrimination: Unfair treatment and actions based on prejudice (see below) including violence, threats, slander, or exclusion.

Diversity: Differences in identity. This might include race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, gender, class, disability status, size, sexual orientation, personality type, communication style, education, and life experience, among many other aspects of identity.

Equity: Ensures equal access to opportunity, often in a workplace. Recognizes that everyone does not start at the same place.

Family Medical Leave Act: A Federal law passed in 1993 that provides job-protected unpaid leave entitlement for eligible employees for up to 12 workweeks. An employer must grant an eligible employee up to a total of 12 workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for: the birth of a child and care of that child; the placement of a child for adoption or foster care; the care of an immediate family member with a serious health condition; or for an employee's own serious health condition.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA): A Federal law passed in 1996 that requires the creation of national standards to prevent sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge.

Impairment: Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the body's multiple systems. The A.D.A. further defines "impairment" as any mental or psychological disorder.

Inclusion: Broad concept that refers to the extent to which individuals from underrepresented groups feel valued and represented within all levels of an organization.

Inclusive Design: The process of creating products that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics; born out of digital environments. Also see Universal Design.

Intersectionality: Describes the unique ways race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, status, and other social and demographic identities come together to inform peoples lived experiences. For more information on intersectionality, read the CWB's curated research report, Intersectionality in the Workplace: Broadening the Lens of Inclusion.

Learning Disability: A general term referring to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, spelling, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical skills.

Mental Health: Our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act as we cope with life. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

Mental Health Support: A wide spectrum of activities, from mindfulness practices and coaching to formal mental health services that involve a therapist or psychiatrist.

Mental Illness: Typically used in a medical context to refer to a wide range of conditions related to emotional and mental health.

Mental Impairment: Any mental or psychological disorder, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

Microaggression: Subtle and normally unintentional slight—resulting from unconscious bias—that undervalues or demeans a person. Can include being overlooked, disrespected, or de-valued because of a specific identity (such as disability, race, gender, or the intersection of multiple identities). Also see Microinequity.

Microinequity: Subtle and normally unintentional slight—resulting from unconscious bias—that undervalues or demeans a person. Can include being overlooked, disrespected, or de-valued because of a specific identity (such as disability, race, gender, or the intersection of multiple identities). Also see Microaggression.

Physical Impairment: Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the body's many systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory, cardiovascular, and more.

Psychiatric Disability: A term typically used in a legal or policy context to refer to impairments covered under the A.D.A.

Qualified Individual with a Disability: A person with a disability who satisfies the requisite skill, experience, education, and other job-related requirements of an employment position.

Race-Based Traumatic Stress: Psychological distress that can include nervousness, mental fatigue, anger, shame, distraction, and other emotions related to individual or collective encounters with racism. The 2020 murder of George Floyd and other Black individuals along with recent increased hate incidents against AAPI communities have heightened awareness of race-based traumatic stress.

Reasonable Accommodation: Any modification of or adjustment to a job, an employment practice, or the work environment that makes it possible for a qualified individual with a disability to apply for, perform the essential functions of, and enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment.

Trauma: The experience of severe psychological distress following any terrible or life-threatening incident.

Universal Design: The process of creating products that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics; born out of digital environments. Also see Inclusive Design.

Disability and Mental Health Educational Resources

Non-Profits and More

- **The Arc** is a national community-based organization advocating for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and serving them and their families.

- **The Center for Workplace Mental Health** provides employers the tools, resources and information needed to promote and support the mental health of employees and their families.

- **Diversability** is a community of people with disabilities (and the people who support us), on a mission to elevate disability pride, together.

- **Expandability's** mission is to provide support and services that aim to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities by supporting and developing their abilities through advocacy and meaningful employment.

- **Hearing, Speech & Deaf Center (HSDC)'s** mission is to foster inclusive and accessible communities through communication, advocacy, and education. We envision an inclusive, accessible world where everyone is understood and respected.

- **Inclusively** is a professional network connecting candidates with disabilities, mental health conditions, and chronic illnesses to jobs and inclusive employers.

- **Lime Connect** represents the largest network of high-potential university students and professionals—including veterans - who happen to have disabilities in the world.

- **LINK20** is a social movement of young activists, with and without disabilities, who aim to advance the inclusion of people with disabilities in society.

- **Mentra** is a neurodivergent-friendly talent platform that intelligently matches neurodiverse individuals with employers that value their strengths.

- **Neurodiversity in the Workplace** connects autistic and other neurodivergent job seekers to high-level careers.

- **The Office of Disability Employment Policy** is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities.

- **PurpleSpace** is a networking and professional development hub for disabled employees, resource group leaders, and allies from all sectors and trades.

- **The Ruderman Family Foundation** advocates for and advances the inclusion of people with disabilities throughout society.

- **Thrive Global** provides companies and individuals sustainable, science-based solutions to enhance wellbeing and performance to end the stress and burnout epidemic.

Guides

- A Guide to Disability Rights Laws
- Anti-Oppression: Anti-Ableism
- Disability Language Guide
- Disability & HR: Tips for Human Resource Professionals
- Inclusion@Work: A Framework for Building a Disability-Inclusive Organization
- Mental Health Conditions in the Workplace and the ADA
- Professional & Personal Resources for Transitioning Workplaces
- Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace
- Workplace Mental Health Toolkit

Podcasts

- Breaking Dishes
- Disability Matters
- Mental Health Works Podcast
- Let's Talk About Mental Health
- The Anxious Achiever

Online Learnings

- Dirkse Counseling and Consulting: Disability Inclusion Training
- eCornell: Workplace Disability Inclusion
- LinkedIn Learning: Supporting Workers with Disabilities
- Mental Health First Aid
- Understood: Disability Inclusion in the Workplace: Free online training course

Books

- A Dozen Brilliant Reasons to Employ Disabled People: Why successful businesses see inclusion as an asset rather than a problem.
- No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement
- Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment
- Secrets & Big News: Enabling people to be themselves at work
- The Power of Disability: 10 Lessons for Surviving, Thriving, and Changing the World

Endnotes

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