

4-1-2010

Employment of People with Disabilities in Georgia Local Governments: Identifying Barriers to Employment

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**Employment of People with Disabilities in Georgia Local Governments:
Identifying Barriers to Employment**

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A Practicum Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master of Public Administration

Kennesaw State University
May 2010

Department of Political Science and International Affairs

Master of Public Administration Program

College of Humanities & Social Sciences

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, Georgia

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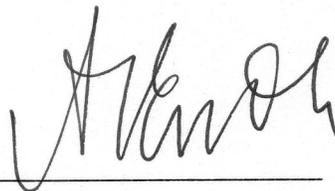
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For the capstone requirement for the Master of Public Administration

Professional exercise in the Department of Political Science and International Affairs

At the May 2010 graduation

Capstone Director:



Employment of People with Disabilities in Georgia Local Governments: Identifying Barriers to Employment

Executive Summary

One in five Americans lives with a disability, yet this group has one of the highest unemployment rates. Over the years, many surveys have been conducted to understand the reasons for the high unemployment rate facing this group. Nearly all these studies have concentrated on the private sector, indentifying various barriers to employment including: lack of knowledge and awareness among employers, legal and safety concerns, financial issues, lack of recruitment strategies, limited social relationships among people with disabilities, potential attendance problems, and conflicting government programs. Among the myriad of obstacles facing people with disabilities, these are just some of the most common barriers to employment mentioned in the literature, other barriers may be present given individual and organizational situations. This research concentrates on the public sector, specifically local governments in Georgia, and attempts to improve the understanding of barriers to employment of people with disabilities.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the opinions of public managers in Georgia regarding the barriers to employment that people with disabilities throughout the state are experiencing when seeking local government jobs. The study also attempts to highlight barriers to public employment by drawing parallels with studies done in the private sector, thus attempting to identify unique barriers specific to public employment, and lays the groundwork for further research.

A 20 question survey instrument was sent to 200 managers in Georgia local governments, and 45 were completed resulting in a response rate of 22.5 percent. The research revealed that

while the majority of the barriers were not similar to the ones previously identified in the private sector, some similarities do exist. One of the major barriers in both sectors is the lack of targeted recruitment strategies for this group. The respondents also agreed that people with disabilities may face discrimination in hiring practices. Researchers also selected specific variables to analyze whether or not the size of the organization affected the responses; however, no relationship was identified in this particular study. The research provides possible recommendations for reducing these barriers in public sector employment for people with disabilities in Georgia.

This issue should be of relevance to government given their role as model employers and in ensuring equal employment opportunities for various underrepresented groups such as people with disabilities. Future studies of local governments pertaining to their hiring practices of people with disabilities would add to the understanding of the barriers to employment within their agencies.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Dr. Barbara Neuby for her continued guidance and for always encouraging us to strive to the next level. Dr. Neuby extended her personal time to ensure that students understood the material. Also, we would like to thank Dr. Ulf Zimmermann for placing his classes in context of the real world, and providing us with the advice and leadership needed to succeed. We thank Dr. Sungjoo Choi for her expertise and recommendations on this topic. Finally, we would like to thank Dr. Andrew Ewoh for his time, guidance, and support in completing this research project.

Natasha would like to thank her friends and family for their continued encouragement. She is deeply grateful to her mother and brother for their unconditional love, and for always believing in her. She is also very appreciative of all the support she received from her manager and colleagues.

Laura would like to thank her friends and family for all their love and support throughout graduate school. She would like to extend a special thanks to her boyfriend for his patience and thoughtfulness during the completion of the graduate program.

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Employment of People with Disabilities in Georgia Local Governments: Improving the Understanding of Barriers to Employment

Introduction

According to the 2005 U.S. Census data, people with disabilities are a large part of the population, making up about 20 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2005). Despite their large numbers, people with disabilities face several challenges, including lack of employment, access to healthcare, and transportation, and higher poverty rates than people without disabilities (Taylor, 1998, 1). The lack of employment for people with disabilities is the main reason for many of these issues and the underlying cause of the higher poverty rates and inadequate healthcare for this population resulting in a greater dependence on government assistance programs at the federal and local levels. The 2007 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report on *The Future of Disability in America* calls for improved overall access for people with disabilities and elaborates that “disability in the form of limited activities and restricted participation in social life is not an unavoidable result of injury and chronic disease. It results, in part, from choices society makes about working conditions, health care, transportation, housing, and other aspects of our environment” (Institute of Medicine, 2007, 1). Thus, a disability may be considered to be a functional limitation due to lack of appropriate environmental accommodations. The existing barriers persist in making accessibility difficult despite laws promising equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Indeed, new laws and the implementation of several government programs have not been able to reduce the national unemployment rates for people with disabilities which remain high in all sectors. According to the Harris Poll, “only 29 percent of Americans with disabilities, aged 18 to 64, are working, compared to 79 percent of Americans without disabilities” (Taylor, 1998, 1). In addition, a 2000 survey by Louis Harris and Associates found that 67 percent of those people with disabilities

who were not working did prefer to work (Dixon, Kruse, Van Horn, 2003, 9). Reasons for these staggering statistics include barriers to employment such as lack of knowledge and awareness among employers. Public employers may be either uninformed or have only partial information about the high unemployment rate of people with disabilities and of the federal and state incentive programs available to them. In addition, this population faces inequities due to negative assumptions by employers. For instance, employers may not recognize the true value of people with disabilities in the public workforce and have preconceived notions about this group's ability to perform tasks in the workplace. While the private sector may not prioritize the hiring of people with disabilities, the public sector ensures appropriate representation and social equity in government employment. Government plays a strong role as a model employer and has a responsibility to ensure that all groups are well represented. Yet, only seven percent of people with disabilities make up the federal workforce, and the majority of the disabilities were not severe (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2006). There is clearly a discrepancy between the percentage of people with disabilities in the U.S. (20 percent) and the number of people within this group that are employed in the public sector (7 percent). The picture of unemployment for people with disabilities at the state and local levels is similarly dismal. For instance, in Georgia, approximately 53.6 percent of working-age residents with various forms of disability are unemployed (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2006).

The nation has promoted policies to enhance the employment of minorities and the employment of women. Given the proportion of the population with disabilities, it is time to do the same for this disadvantaged group.

Purpose of the Study

The data referenced above have underlying policy implications for the high unemployment rate of people with disabilities. Using Georgia as an example to improve our understanding of the reasons for the high unemployment rate among people with disabilities, research indicates that these individuals face many barriers to employment. A 2006 study conducted by the Bobby Dodd Institute, a nonprofit organization committed to training and employing people with disabilities, was aimed at providing reasons for the high unemployment rate among people with disabilities in Georgia by asking human resource managers of private businesses in Atlanta questions about their knowledge and attitudes regarding hiring people with disabilities. The results indicated that these managers were not knowledgeable about hiring people with disabilities. Managers also cited various barriers in hiring people with disabilities including lack of applicants and the perception that this group could not complete work assignments (Bobby Dodd Institute, 2006). Although the Bobby Dodd Institute's study provided an overview of the situation among private businesses in Georgia, no known studies on public employment have been conducted at the local level to evaluate the knowledge and attitudes of managers in Georgia local governments.

The purpose of this study is to survey Georgia local public managers regarding their opinions about the barriers to employment for people with disabilities in local government. Barriers that are unique to public employment can be isolated by weighing them against the results with regional and national surveys conducted in the private sector. Understanding the barriers to employment of people with disabilities in the public workforce will not only improve our knowledge, but it will lay the groundwork for identifying reasons for the existing problem with possible solutions and/or recommendations.

Statement of the Problem and Research Question

Usually the motive of private sector firms is profit maximization which covers all aspects of business, including hiring practices. If private sector managers believe that hiring people with disabilities is not the most efficient use of resources, they will tend not to hire such individuals. As the Bobby Dodd Institute's study reveals, many private human resource managers assume that hiring people with disabilities requires costly accommodations, additional training, and higher insurance premiums (Bobby Dodd Institute, 2006). For these managers, such assumptions may help validate the low rate of employment among people with disabilities. But governments, as model employers in a representative democracy, should be actively recruiting and hiring people with disabilities. Being a model employer includes the assurance that under-represented and marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, are represented in government workforce. According to the U.S. Census data, one in five Americans is living with a disability (U.S. Census, 2005). Given these data, people with disabilities should be hired or employed in the public workforce to ensure their representation in the public interest. Nigro and his associates note that when diverse groups are represented in public employment, "legitimate interests of all groups are more likely to be heard and reflected in policy choices" (Nigro, Nigro, and Kellough, 2007, 250). The employment of people with disabilities in government should serve as a positive example for private sector employers by projecting an image of these individuals as productive members of society. The government's efforts with integrating minorities and women into the workforce have lead to much success. Similar steps must be taken by governments at all levels to improve outcomes for people with disabilities.

Given this background, and using the Bobby Dodd Institute's study and others as sounding boards, the researchers aim to examine the knowledge, awareness, and attitudes toward

hiring people with disabilities in Georgia local governments. The question the researchers want to answer is: Are the barriers to public employment of people with disabilities in Georgia similar to private sector employment? Public sector managers, including human resource, city, assistant city, and county managers, across Georgia were surveyed in this study. The research also collected other demographic variables such as the type of agency (city, county, or other) and its size. Understanding the attitudes of public managers in Georgia toward the hiring of people with disabilities is a crucial first step in helping to determine the reasons for the exceptionally high unemployment rate among this population.

Relevancy of the Research

This research is relevant given the large number of people with disabilities. Furthermore, this number is expected to grow, because of the increasing number of veterans with disabilities returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, the barriers to lack of employment for people with disabilities have contributed to reasons why a large percentage of this population is living below the poverty level. According to the 1998 Harris Poll, “people with disabilities are almost three times as likely as people without disabilities to live in households with total incomes of \$15,000 or less (34 percent compared to 12 percent),” resulting in increased dependence on public assistance programs (Taylor, 1998, 3). Laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) were intended to help people with disabilities become independent, by providing them with equal opportunities. Also, since the majority of Americans obtain access to healthcare through employer-provided insurance coverage, the high rate of unemployment among people with disabilities negatively impacts their access to healthcare. The need for assistance programs has put a financial strain on government budgets.

In fiscal year 2002, the federal government spent approximately \$226 billion on “housing, food assistance, rehabilitation, income assistance for families, assistance for veterans, and other programs for people with disabilities” (Stapleton et al., 2006, 704). Local governments are also facing increasing expenses due to the unemployment rate of people with disabilities and could save funds by increasing employment of this group. For example, the Georgia Department of Labor’s Rehabilitation Services Office states that if just one percent of people with disabilities that wanted to work found full time employment, “almost \$40 million dollars would flow back into the Georgia economy” (Georgia Department of Labor, Rehabilitation Services, 2009). Thus, governments must increase the percentage of people with disabilities hired, but doing so will require some understanding of the obstacles toward hiring them. Employing individuals with disabilities reduces dependence on food stamps, social security disability income, social security income, Medicaid, and public housing (NISH Letter to Congress, 2009). Given the large financial impact, it seems logical that governments at all levels should focus on improving the employability of this group of citizens.

One way Georgia is improving the employability of people with disabilities is through the Georgia State Use Program. Established in 1993 by the Georgia Legislature, the program maintains a constant market for the products and services provided by people with disabilities. Through this program, state and local agencies are encouraged to purchase products from organizations that employ people with disabilities (Georgia Enterprises, 2010). Georgia State Use Program works closely with local nonprofits, including the Bobby Dodd Institute and WorkTec, to employ people with disabilities in government contract work throughout the state. For example, in 2008, the Bobby Dodd Institute trained and assisted in employing more than 500 disabled Georgia residents through local and federal government contracts (Bobby Dodd Annual

Report, 2008, 1). Similarly, Worktec works closely with the Clayton County School System to help train and employ students with disabilities transitioning from high school into the workforce (Clayton County Public Schools Worktec, 2009, 1).

In attempting to point out barriers specific to employment in local Georgia governments, the researchers first conducted a review of the existing literature including employment trends for people with disabilities, current federal laws and legislation, and studies on barriers to employment in the public sector. The methodology section outlines the study design. Together with the type of study used and sampling procedures, the researchers also included a discussion of the variables studied. Moreover, a discussion on detailed analysis of three specific variables and their relationship to agency size is also provided. Following the framework for the study, the findings section displays background of the agencies as well as a discussion of the barriers to employment for Georgia local governments. Along with the bar and pie charts illustrating the findings, cross tabulation tables are used to display any differences among the size of the agency. The conclusion section summarizes the findings of the study and provides recommendations for further improvement.

Literature Review

Discrimination against people with disabilities occurs in hiring processes among all sectors, including public employment. Recognizing this issue, Congress and several U.S. presidents have tried to encourage the employment of people with disabilities. The passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibited discrimination against “otherwise qualified handicapped individuals” by federal agencies and organizations receiving federal funding (Hays, Kearney, and Cogburn, 2009, 226). Furthermore, the Rehabilitation Act went beyond

discrimination and stated that “affirmative action” is required by all federal contractors and agencies to actively recruit and train people with disabilities. This mandated the federal government to take additional steps to include people with disabilities in the candidate pool. Hays, Kearney, and Cogburn (2009) write that the implementation of affirmative action efforts “work to integrate society more rapidly than other approaches, reduce income inequalities, further distributive justice, and promote efficiency by ensuring that the talents of all individuals are used” (Hays, Kearney, and Cogburn, 2009, 228). Later, the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) made it illegal for private employers, and state and local governments to discriminate against people with disabilities in employment (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005). Clear and strong language in section 102 of the ADA states that “no covered entity shall discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability because of the disability of such individual in regard to job application procedures, the hiring, advancement, or discharge of employees, employee compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment” (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). The 2008 Amendment to the ADA provided an even broader definition of “disability” in order to “make it easier for an individual seeking protection under the ADA to establish that he or she has a disability within the meaning of the ADA” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2009).

Furthermore, to increase employment of people with disabilities, the Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act was enacted by Congress in 1939. Now referred to as the AbilityOne Program, this Act encourages training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities by coordinating activities with nonprofit organizations to provide goods and services to the federal government (Committee For Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, 1994).

This Act mandated each state to develop its own program. Georgia's training and development program for people with disabilities is known as the Georgia State Use Program. The AbilityOne training program and local programs show savings on government balance sheets between \$3,067 and \$6,918 per AbilityOne employee by reducing the reliance of these individuals on government assistance programs through training and employing them in the workforce (NISH Letter to Congress, 2009).

In 1999, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act was enacted to establish federal programs to help provide employment and other support to those individuals receiving Social Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance. Incentives have also been provided to states to "experiment with changes in disability programs and policies and offer a wider range of support to people with disabilities to help them become independent" (Stapleton et al., 2006, 711). The federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit also provides tax credits to employers who hire marginalized groups including people with disabilities and veterans, with tax credits of up to \$4,800 per year for new hires (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Another financial incentive for employers is Disabled Access Credit which "provides tax credits to small businesses for expenses incurred in becoming compliant with the ADA" (Silverstein, 2005, 417).

However, despite these attempts by the federal government to encourage the employment of people with disabilities, the rate of unemployment among this group remains high. Research shows that "legislation is insufficient to eradicate systematic discrimination in employment practices" (Gewurtz and Kirsh, 2009, 35). Every day, individuals continue to face many barriers to employment including discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status among many others. In addition to discrimination based on these factors, people with disabilities face many other specific barriers to employment.

Experts have identified general barriers to employment for people with disabilities that include: lack of knowledge and awareness among employers, legal and safety concerns, financial issues, lack of recruitment strategies, limited social relationships among people with disabilities, potential attendance problems, and conflicting government programs. These are just some of the major barriers that researchers have identified; however, this is not a complete list of all the barriers that people with disabilities face. Furthermore, while the barriers identified here will apply to many people with disabilities, like any population group, they are diverse with varying individual needs. Due to their differences, not all people with disabilities face the same barriers to employment. Lack of knowledge and awareness among employers toward hiring people with disabilities is a major concern. A recent article in *Black Enterprise* magazine presented an interview with James Harper, a senior financial analyst with Boeing Systems and 57-year old individual with polio, who stated that “it was challenging getting in [corporate America] because there is a misconception there's a multiplicity of things that a person with a disability can't do” (Smith, 2009, 60). Furthermore, research suggests that this population faces discrimination and prejudice from employers—negatively impacting employment. A 2008 report from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provides proof that issues such as discrimination exist in government. In fiscal year 2006, people with physical disabilities employed by the federal government filed 3,843 complaints of discrimination based on harassment, reasonable accommodations, and terms/conditions of employment (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008, 21). Based on these statistics, it is clear that discrimination exists against this group as a whole. Complaints to the EEOC from people with disabilities regarding issues such as discrimination and harassment have been increasing since fiscal year 2002.

Lisa Schur cites the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1983) and Yuker (1988) to identify reasons for the low employment rate among people with disabilities, including a “history of social exclusion and discrimination” (Schur, 2002, 339). In Schur’s research on the employment of people with disabilities, she also stated that the expanded results of the study indicate that “4.2 million people with disabilities believe they have experienced discrimination in the past five years” (Schur, 2002, 346). Disability expert Majorie Baldwin discusses the lack of available information to employers about potential new hires (Baldwin, 1997, 37). Many employers lack appropriate knowledge and have preconceived notions regarding the ability of people with disabilities to perform job tasks. For instance, in the 200 Atlanta-based businesses surveyed by the Bobby Dodd Institute’s human resource management study, many factors were identified as reasons for the current hiring practices of people with disabilities. The survey focused on businesses’ knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions towards hiring people with disabilities in the private sector. In response to a question on barriers that private employers face in the employment of people with disabilities, “49 percent mentioned that people with disabilities cannot adequately perform required work duties and 25 percent noted a lack of knowledge about people with disabilities” (Bobby Dodd Institute, 2006). These data reinforce the negative image and lack of understanding that employers have for people with disabilities in Georgia.

Employers may also believe that if they hire people with disabilities, they may have higher litigation costs due to high profile cases such as the one described in Michelle Conlin’s article about a former Chuck E. Cheese employee who was awarded \$13 million in an ADA discrimination lawsuit (Conlin, 2000, 1). Thus, employers may tend to avoid hiring people with disabilities for fear of litigation.

Another employer misconception about people with disabilities is the idea that they will frequently be out sick or find it difficult to complete the work day. Poor attendance could be worsened by the limited accessible transportation to and from the job site, and may be another perceived hindrance toward their employability.

An additional previously identified barrier to employment for people with disabilities on the part of the employer is the false impression that there will be a need for increased investment in safety measures. Employers may worry about the need to provide extra support during an emergency or they may fear that people with disabilities have an increased risk of physical injury. In actuality, a 30-year study by DuPont found that people with disabilities “had a 90 percent above-average job performance, with safety and attendance records that were far above the norm too” (Conlin, 2000, 1).

Employers face perceived financial concerns which are another barrier toward the employment of people with disabilities. The costs may be related to accommodations in accordance with the ADA. Many of these concerns are due to misconceptions. For example, the Bobby Dodd Institute found that “when asked about perceived average costs for accommodating people with disabilities, 41 percent felt the costs would exceed \$1000” (Bobby Dodd Institute, 2006). Similarly, a 2003 survey by Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, found that 40 percent of employers surveyed “maintain that it can be difficult or costly to provide accommodations to workers with disabilities—particularly those that have no experience doing so” (Dixon, Kruse, and Van Horn, 2003, 2). Employers are mandated to make adjustments and necessary accommodations to address functional limitations for an individual with a disability. The Rutgers University survey results highlight a common misconception about the costs for accessible workstations. If there is any cost at all associated with providing accommodations for

people with disabilities, the Georgia Department of Labor Rehabilitation Services cites that the average cost for accommodating the workplace for people with disabilities is less than \$100 (Georgia Department of Labor Rehabilitation Services, 2009).

Another major obstacle facing people with disabilities in all sectors is the lack of targeted recruitment strategies. The Bobby Dodd Institute, for instance, found that “less than 30 percent of surveyed companies report[ed] having in-place specific recruiting or hiring practices for workers with disabilities” (Bobby Dodd Institute, 2006). This statistic was tied to the overall size of the organization, with smaller organizations reporting fewer recruitment strategies for people with disabilities. Lack of recruitment strategies for people with disabilities has historical precedents, similar to the lack of targeted hiring strategies for women and ethnic minorities prior to the 1960s. Affirmative action policies encouraging recruitment of these groups have led to targeted strategies to encourage more women and ethnic minorities to enter the candidate pool. Although people with disabilities have historically faced the same frustrations, and affirmative action policies have helped to encourage their hiring, this group continues to face the same issues today.

Hiring officials and managers in government also lack sufficient knowledge on the recruitment of people with disabilities. The *Schedule A* appointing authority is designed to make the process of hiring people with disabilities easier, but managers lack the knowledge about the process (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008, v-vi). Through this process, people with disabilities applying for federal jobs can be hired on a non-competitive basis. This hiring authority is under-utilized by managers because of their lack of awareness about the *Schedule A* appointing authority. In regard to the application process, people with disabilities are

unable to attach their *Schedule A* form to the online application, leading to an additional step by having to fax or mail the *Schedule A* form before the closing date of the job announcement.

Furthermore, the cumbersome application process is frustrating for most people wishing to enter government service, whether local, state, or federal. It is time consuming to complete the application process and the review of the application by hiring managers may take several months. For people with disabilities, this may pose an additional burden because federal government “vacancy announcements are hard to understand, the online application process is unnecessarily difficult, or the position requires a security clearance” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008, 23).

A key component to securing employment is the importance of networking and maintaining contact with large and diverse groups. Compared to people without disabilities, many people with disabilities have more limited social relationships. This may also hinder the lack of employment opportunities. Blyden Potts suggests that “social relationships are a very common channel for the flow of information about job opportunities and job candidates” (Potts, 2005, 21). For this reason, the comparative lack of networking opportunities and relationship building for people with disabilities has adversely affected their employability. In addition, barriers such as the misconceptions about people with disabilities also result from the lack of social capital or social relationships among this group.

Another major barrier facing people with disabilities is the conflict among existing government programs. Many current policies discourage people with disabilities from finding employment. For instance, Silverstein and his colleagues discuss the “lack of or fear of losing necessary healthcare—including long-term services and supports such as personal assistance services and assistive technology” by people with disabilities as a possible barrier (Silverstein et

al., 2005, 414). The fear of losing healthcare will be relevant if an individual receives health benefits through public assistance programs including Medicaid. Stapleton and his associates highlight additional examples of the inherent conflict, including:

- Current waiting period to qualify for Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) may exceed five months and people with disabilities are encouraged to remain idle rather than seek employment during this time since it might impede them from qualifying for SSDI.
- SSDI beneficiaries who return to work may lose some or all of their disability benefits as a result of earning income above a certain level.
- SSDI benefits are taxed at a lower level than earned income.
- Conflicts within existing support programs discourage many people with disabilities to work since they may also receive multiple cash benefits from programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, veterans benefits, worker's compensation, and private disability insurance which may be lost if they earn income above a certain income level.
- The maze of disability benefits is time-consuming, leaving little time for productive work for people with disabilities.

The authors conclude that government “programs foster low expectations for self-sufficiency and dependence becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy” for this group (Stapleton et al., 2006, 711-714). Thus, while on the one hand the government is trying to encourage the employment of people with disabilities through public programs, on the other hand, eligibility requirements for government benefits discourage these individuals from seeking employment.

In addition to public programs that inhibit people with disabilities from seeking employment, many government reforms that are designed to encourage employers to hire them

have also not been successful. For instance, the 1999 Federal Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act has had limited implementation success because organizations are discouraged from participating due to the “complex payment structure [and] the need for up-front capital to purchase training equipment” (Stapleton et al., 2006, 715). Despite attempts by the government to be proactive in improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities, they have not been successful because of lack of proper planning and difficulty with program implementation.

The lack of coordination or conflict with existing government programs is worsened due to the lack of accountability and goal setting by one agency or office within the federal government. Moreover, the lack of strategic plans for hiring people with disabilities hinders the government from attaining its recruitment goals. Statistics from government agencies show that from fiscal year 2005, “43 percent of agencies failed to establish any type of goal to improve the employment outlook for [people with targeted disabilities] PWTD at their agency” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008, 13).

Methodology

Type of Experimental Design Used

A survey instrument was designed to seek information about barriers in the public workplace faced by those with disabilities. Barriers assessed include knowledge and awareness of employers, recruitment strategies, legal and safety concerns, and financial issues, among others. The survey asked the respondents their views regarding obstacles to entry into the public workforce, which include common misconceptions on the part of the employers, in this case Georgia local governments, and lack of current priorities to hire individuals with disabilities.

The survey consisted of 20 closed-ended questions, including 16 measured on a Likert scale. The remaining four were closed-ended factual and knowledge questions that provide demographic information about the agency. The factual question regarding the agency size was used as an addition to the study in order to distinguish differences in opinions and information by looking at three specific variables: knowledge of the Georgia State Use Program, recruitment strategies, and the cost of accommodations.

The researchers began distributing the survey electronically in mid-December of 2009 through March 3, 2010. Surveys were collected electronically, via fax, and in-person. To ensure a greater response rate, researchers sent two follow-up e-mails. The survey instrument was accompanied by a cover letter which described the purpose of the research, ensured confidentiality, and included a statement of informed consent. Those participating via e-mail were requested to send completed surveys via e-mail to a secure e-mail address—disabilitysurvey@yahoo.com. The survey provided several types of data using closed-ended questions.

The researchers targeted public managers such as city, assistant city, county, and human resource managers, in Georgia, sending 200 surveys. Of those, 45 were returned by the deadline, for a response rate of 22.5 percent. Two surveys were received from state agencies, however, these were not used since this study focuses on local governments.

Unit of Analysis and Ethical Considerations

The units of analysis are public managers at various levels in Georgia local governments within the sample. Regarding ethical considerations, the researchers followed Kennesaw State University's Institutional Board Review (IRB) procedures. The researchers received approval for the survey from the IRB in November of 2009. Accompanied by each survey was a cover

letter providing an informed consent statement that describes the purpose of the research and respondents' rights. The letter also specified that individual identifiers would not be collected, thus making the surveys anonymous. IRB was informed that no deceptive practices will be used in this research.

Selection of Population and Sampling Procedures

The population of this study consisted of public managers in Georgia local governments. The researchers used a nonprobability sampling design, specifically a convenience sample. The convenience sample consisted of the researchers' personal contact list of city and county managers at various levels in Georgia. In addition, researchers utilized an on-line database from the Georgia City-County Management Association (GCCMA, 2009). The database provided contacts of city, assistant city, and county managers covering more than 200 cities and counties across Georgia.

Variables and Operational Definitions of Disability

Variable Discussion

Based on national and local studies of private businesses regarding employment issues for people with disabilities, the researchers measured barriers to employment using the following variables: knowledge and awareness among employers, legal and safety concerns, financial issues, recruitment strategies, limited social relationships among people with disabilities, and potential attendance issues. Previous studies have identified these variables as some of the major barriers to employment. In discussing knowledge and awareness of public managers and human resource professionals, researchers gauged if these individuals were up to date on the

unemployment situation of people with disabilities, the Georgia State government incentives to hire this group, discrimination against this population and their perceived ability to perform tasks in the workplace. Also, the researchers asked a closed-ended question about the actual unemployment rate of people with disabilities in Georgia to test the public managers' accuracy. However, this question was omitted from the findings due to lack of sufficient responses from the respondents.

In addition to lack of knowledge about the unemployment situation as a whole, researchers examined the public managers' preconceived notions about safety and legal concerns pertaining to hiring people with disabilities. Surveys in the private sector indicated that managers may fear that they are not in compliance with the amended ADA laws and that hiring people with disabilities may raise risk of litigation if they are in violation of the law. Also, additional safety measures may be required when hiring people with disabilities, such as providing more support during evacuations or increased risk of physical injury. Being budget conscious, public managers at the local government level may be concerned with spending more money on accommodations for people with disabilities as well as the increased costs for employer provided healthcare. For example, costly accommodations may include specialized voice recognition computers for individuals with vision impairment.

The high unemployment rate of 53.6 percent for people with disabilities in Georgia may indicate that local governments are not actively recruiting this group. The researchers would like to know whether the recruitment of this group of individuals is a priority for government agencies and if there are current strategies in place to address the situation. In fact priorities have been set for the federal government, however, federal managers seemed unaware as indicated by a 2002 study conducted by Cornell University on 1,001 supervisors in the federal government

which found that “60 percent [of those surveyed] were unaware of Executive Order 13163, requiring the hiring of 100,000 qualified individuals with disabilities over a five-year period” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008, 8).

The literature also shows that people with disabilities have relatively fewer social contacts as compared to those without such conditions. Researchers surveyed public managers on their perceptions about this reality. Public managers may believe that people with disabilities have worse health outcomes and hence may be absent from work more often. Furthermore, due to physical limitations and lack of transportation, they may face difficulties in being punctual to work every day. Finally, given government’s role as a model employer, researchers attempted to identify if public managers believe that government should have bureaucratic representation of diverse view points, and a responsibility to hire under-represented groups.

Definition of Disability

Traditionally, disabilities have been defined as “characteristics of the body, mind, or senses that...affect a person’s ability to engage independently in some or all aspects of day-to-day life” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004, 1). However, recently, there has been much debate on the definition of “disability.” The U.S. Census acknowledges that the definitions of disability have been changing for the past 30 years and states that “since the definition of a disability varies, the collection of disability statistics depends on the purpose for which it is being used and the survey collecting the information (U.S. Census, 2009). The 2000 U.S. Census definition of disability included an affirmative response to “a four-part question that asked if the individual had a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more that made it difficult to perform certain activities” (U.S. Census, 2000). The categories included

mental disability, difficulty with general life activities such as showering or dressing, mobility or trouble going outside the house, and employment disability. Thus, comparisons between different surveys are not always compatible.

The importance of having a standard definition of “disability” will enable researchers to collect appropriate data to measure the concept of disability. For instance, since the mid-1990s, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management has reported a constant rate (7 percent) of the federal workforce having disabilities and further investigation of these data reveal that the number one disability among these individuals is heart disease with no restricted activity (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2006). In fiscal year 2006, the participation rate of people with targeted disabilities (including deafness, blindness, missing extremities, partial or complete paralysis, convulsive disorders, intellectual disabilities, and distortion of limb and/or spine working in federal government) fell to 0.94% of the federal government’s total work force, the lowest participation rate in 20 years (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2008, v). Without an accurate definition, statistics on the number of people with disabilities may not be a correct.

The new definition of disability covered under the 2008 Amendment expands the meaning of “major life activities” (e.g., reading, walking, and bending) and “major bodily functions”—such as normal cell growth and reproductive functions (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2009). This expanded definition has helped to reduce confusion about the definition of “disability” in legal cases throughout the country.

For the purpose of this research, respondents were not provided with a definition of disability and will define it themselves or as understood in common parlance. In common usage, disability implies an individual who may have any limitation in performing everyday tasks

and/or may require assistive technologies to fulfill these tasks. However, not all disabilities may be included in this definition since many such conditions are not visible. Different individual definitions of disability may pose an additional limitation to this research.

Methods of Data Analysis

A combination of Likert scale and closed-ended questions were used. The responses to the sixteen questions using the Likert scale were analyzed by assigning them a numerical value. The response categories are “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree,” “strongly disagree” and “I don’t know,” and were coded as follows: “strongly agree” = 5, “agree” = 4, “neutral” = 3, “disagree” = 2, “strongly disagree” = 1, and “I don’t know” = 0. The researchers also recorded the number of unanswered responses. These data were entered into the Number Cruncher Statistical Software (NCSS) spreadsheet for analysis. The responses were ranked and summarized using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics revealed the most frequent responses. Graphs and contingency tables were used in the final report to summarize all responses.

The remaining four closed-ended questions were also analyzed using NCSS software. The researchers used letters “a,” “b,” “c,” “d,” or “e” to code responses regarding the number of employees and the people with disabilities employed. The type of agency responses were coded “ci” for city and “co” for county. None of the respondents in the sample selected “other” as a type of agency. Pie charts were used to display the results of these additional questions. The question regarding the perceived unemployment rate of people with disabilities in Georgia was removed from the research analysis due to the limited number of responses.

Once the frequency tables were created for the questions, several statements were chosen from the survey to cross reference with the size of the organization. The cross referenced items included knowledge about the Georgia State Use Program, perceived cost of accommodations, and targeted recruitment strategies for people with disabilities. This information was generated using a cross tabulation table and statistics in the NCSS software to compare the responses of large and small government organizations.

This research has several limitations. The study sample is a convenience sample and not a representative sample, and thus is not “generaliz[able] to a larger population with any accuracy” (O’Sullivan, Rassel, and Berner, 2008, 147). In addition, the sample size of 45 public managers from Georgia local governments is also fairly small. Another limitation is that local government officials may have concerns or fear for accurately completing the survey because of poor representation of people with disabilities, and non-compliance within their organizations. Also, some of the questions are subjective and may represent views of the individual rather than the organization.

Findings

Agency Background

Researchers collected demographic data from the Georgia public managers including the number of people that the agency employs, the percentage of people with disabilities employed by the agency, and the type of agency (city, county, or other). Another question was asked on the survey regarding the perceived unemployment rate of people with disabilities in Georgia. Because of the low response rate for this question (N = 28), and the wide range of answers, the researchers decided not to include this question in the research findings.

In compiling agency information, Figure 1 shows that the majority of the respondents (68.2 percent) were employed as managers in city government and 31.8 percent in county government. In the sample, 30 managers from city government responded and 14 managers from county government. One manager did not respond to this question (N = 44). The survey respondents ranged from managers of small rural cities and counties to managers from larger city and counties in the Metro Atlanta area.

In addition to the type of agency surveyed, Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of the size of the agency by the number of people employed. Although most of the managers worked in city government, 42.2 percent of the respondents came from agencies that employed 200 people or more, and represented the larger cities and counties. Less than 20 percent (17.8 percent) represented the smaller cities and counties employing 50 or less people. The remaining 40 percent fell between these ranges. All the managers in the sample answered this question (N = 45).

As a follow up question to the number of people employed, the researchers also asked the Georgia public managers to estimate the percentage of people with disabilities employed within the city or county agency. Almost 90 percent (89.5 percent) stated that they employed between zero and five percent of people with disabilities. Another 7.9 percent of the managers answered that they employed between 6 and 10 percent of people with disabilities. The surveys showed one outlier (2.6 percent) in the research, employing 20 percent or more of people with disabilities. Only 38 of the 45 respondents answered this question. It is possible that some of the respondents were not aware of the number of people with disabilities that are employed by the agency. Furthermore, managers may not be aware of all the individuals with disabilities since some of them may not have self-identified themselves.

Figure 1

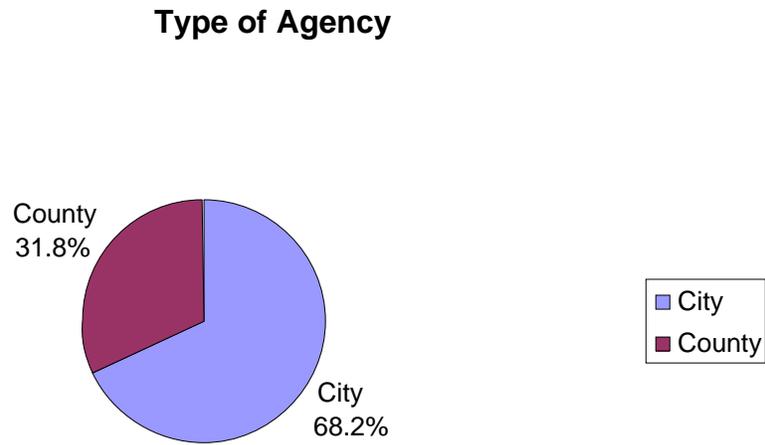


Figure 2

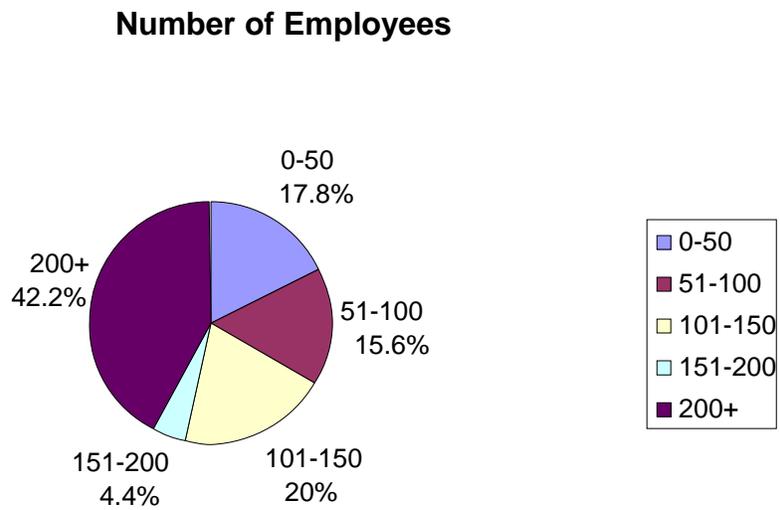
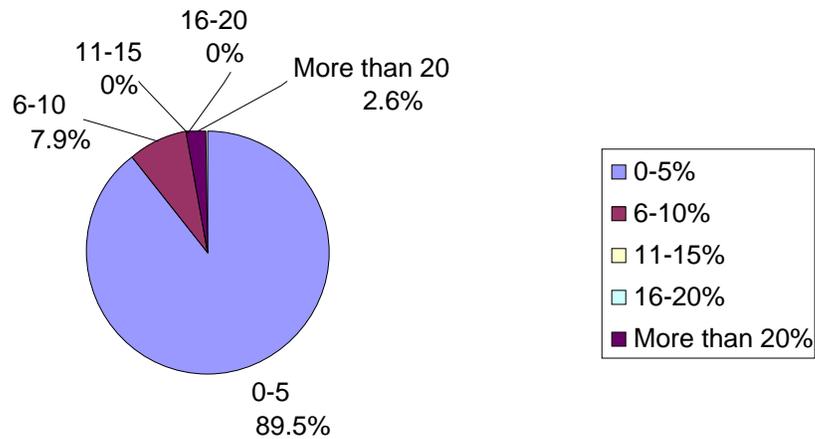


Figure 3

Percentage of Employees with Disabilities



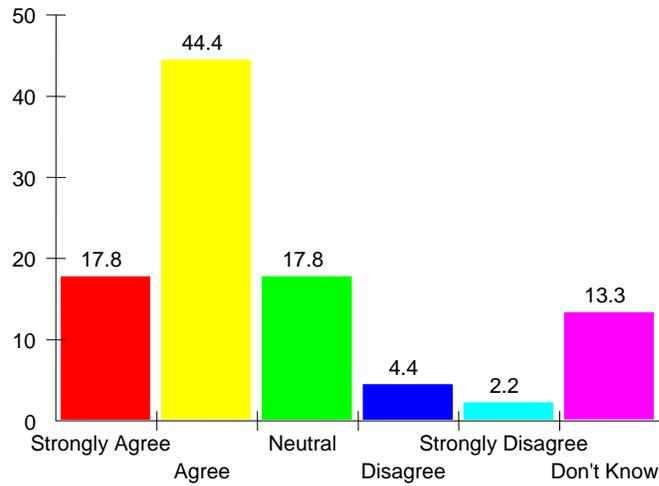
Identifying Specific Barriers

Knowledge

The first three statements in the survey attempted to measure the knowledge of the respondents regarding the employment situation for people with disabilities. The first statement stated “At present, the employment situation for people with disabilities is serious.” Of the 45 responses, the results as shown in Figure 4, indicate that nearly two-thirds (62.2 percent) either strongly agreed or agreed that the employment situation is serious for this population. These results are in contrast to the 2006 Bobby Dodd Institute’s survey findings from 200 managers in the private sector. In the Bobby Dodd survey, “when asked if the unemployment of people with disabilities was at a crisis point, about one-third (32 percent) of total survey participants responded in the affirmative” (Bobby Dodd, 2006). Since the Bobby Dodd Institute surveyed human resource managers of private companies, while the current survey reached out to public managers, the current results may imply an improved awareness about the lack of employment for people with disabilities among public managers.

Figure 4

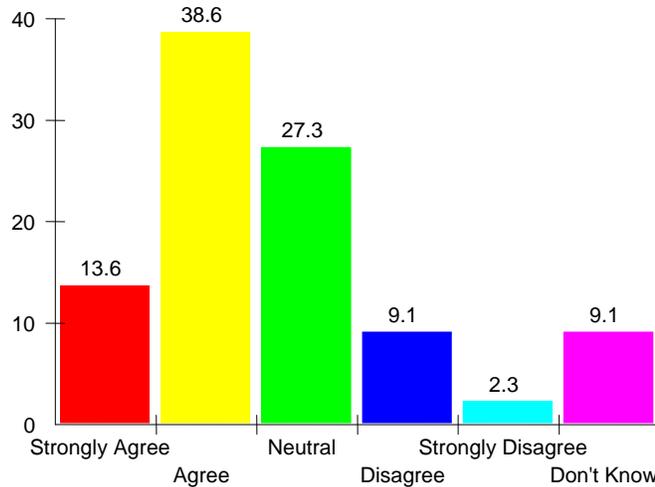
Statement 1: At present, the employment situation for people with disabilities is serious



Furthermore, most respondents supported the view that hiring people with disabilities saves taxpayers/government money. This was the second statement in the survey. Of the 44 managers who responded, more than 50 percent (52.2 percent) either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Figure 5 also shows that 27.3 percent of the respondents were neutral about the idea that hiring people with disabilities saves taxpayers/government money. This high percentage of neutral responses (27.3 percent) among public managers may imply lack of knowledge about the benefits of employing people with disabilities, and the resulting savings for governments on disability income payments and related costs.

Figure 5

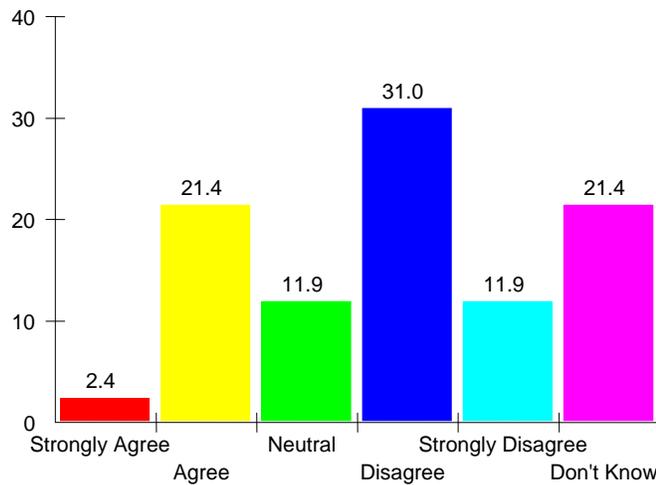
Statement 2: Hiring people with disabilities saves taxpayers/government money



In statement three, the researchers asked the respondents if they were knowledgeable about the Georgia State Use Program. As mentioned earlier, this program encourages government agencies at all levels to purchase products and services from companies that employ a large percentage of people with disabilities. Interestingly, 64.3 percent of the 42 Georgia managers (3 participants did not respond to this question) indicated that they disagreed, strongly disagreed, or did not know about the Georgia State Use Program. Therefore, there is lack of knowledge among the Georgia public managers surveyed about supportive efforts in Georgia that provide work for people with disabilities. Increasing the awareness of this program within Georgia local governments could possibly improve the employment situation of people with disabilities. Figure 6 presents the responses on the Georgia State Use Program.

Figure 6

Statement 3: I am knowledgeable about the Georgia State Use Program

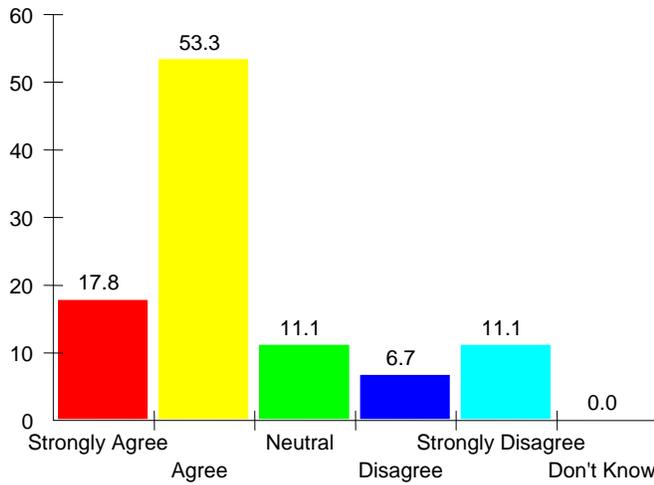


Awareness

Statements four and five in the survey were designed to measure public managers' awareness of discrimination in the hiring practices for people with disabilities. Statement four asked the respondents' opinions on whether or not "people with disabilities may be discriminated against in hiring practices." Figure 7 shows that most respondents (71.1 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed that this population may be discriminated against in hiring practices. People with disabilities agreed with this view as shown in the 2000 Harris survey which indicates that "36 percent of full-time employed people with disabilities say they have encountered some form of discrimination in the workplace due to their disabilities (most commonly from being denied a job, and next from being denied accommodations)" (Dixon, Kruse, and Van Horn, 2003, 9). While the discrimination may be only toward people with visible disabilities, it is clearly an issue in both the public and private sectors' hiring practices.

Figure 7

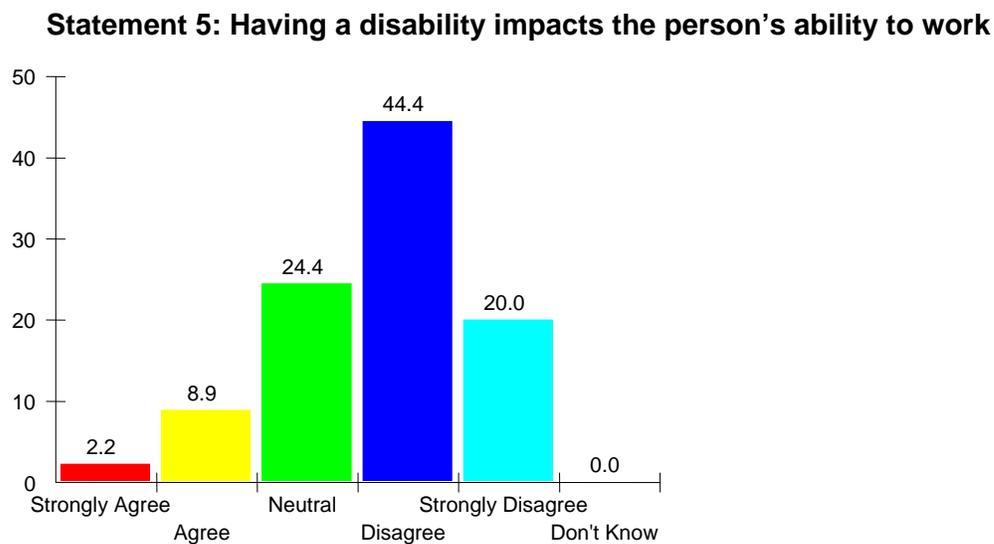
Statement 4: People with disabilities may be discriminated against in hiring practices



In statement five, public managers' views about whether "having a disability impacts the person's ability to work" were garnered. The majority of the respondents (64.4 percent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Also, as shown in Figure 8, only 11.1 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that a person's disability affects his or her ability to work. In contrast, the 2006 Bobby Dodd Institute's survey among Georgia private sector managers found that among barriers to employment, the top ranked impediment to employment of people with disabilities was their lack of the ability to perform work duties. The Institute's study showed that 37 percent of the managers mentioned this as the number one barrier, and 49 percent of the 200 respondents just identified it as a barrier (Bobby Dodd Institute, 2006). Thus, there were wide discrepancies in the results between the two surveys, which may be due to the way the questions were asked. While the Bobby Dodd survey required ranking the barriers, the current survey asked the question with a closed-ended response.

Interestingly, by comparing statements four and five, it may be derived that while Georgia public managers believe that people with disabilities may be discriminated against in hiring practices (71.1 percent), having a disability does not impact their ability to work in the public sector. Thus, the managers recognized the barrier of discrimination that people with disabilities face despite their ability to perform the required job functions.

Figure 8



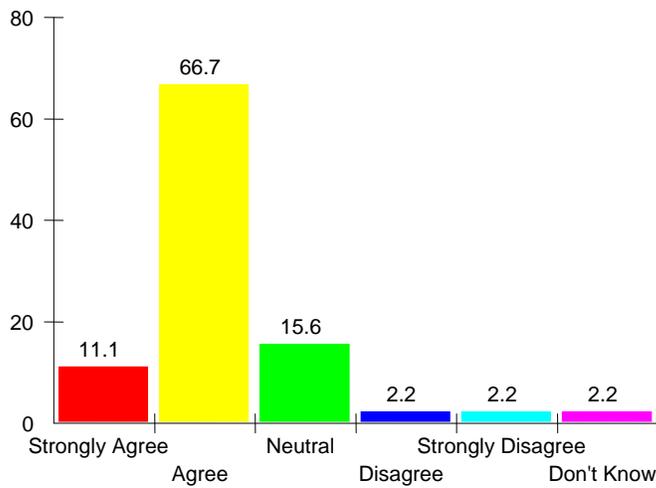
Legal and Safety Issues

Statement six in the survey asked the respondents whether their agencies are up to date on current changes to laws impacting people with disabilities. Results indicated that an overwhelming three-fourths (77.8 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Similarly, in the 2003 Work Trends national survey of private managers, 86 percent of the 502 respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their company “fully complies with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act” (Dixon, Kruse, and Van Horn, 2003,

22). The Georgia survey of public managers' responses are encouraging given the current changes in ADA laws including the 2008 amendment, and demonstrates that government agencies, including small cities in Georgia, make an effort to stay abreast on the latest laws and regulations as required by federal government. Figure 9 shows the distribution of the survey results.

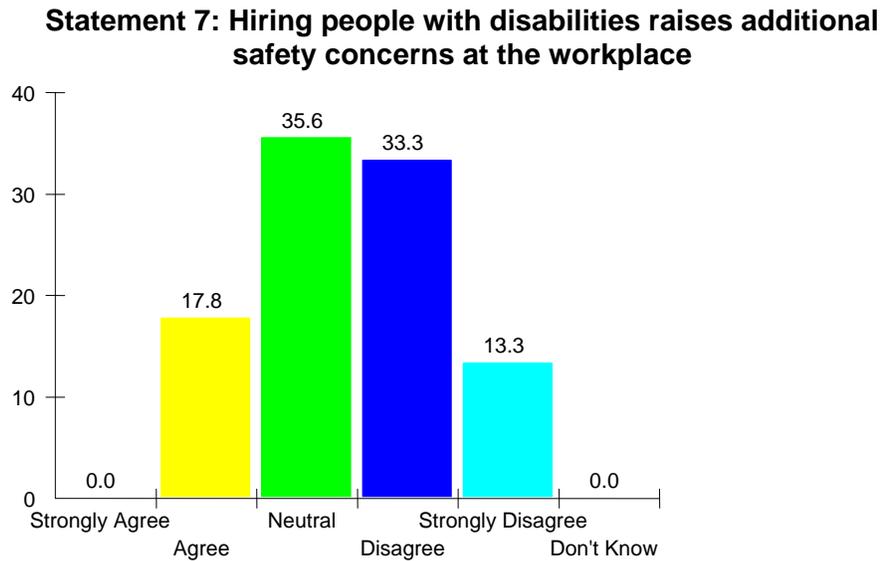
Figure 9

Statement 6: My agency is up to date on current changes to laws impacting people with disabilities



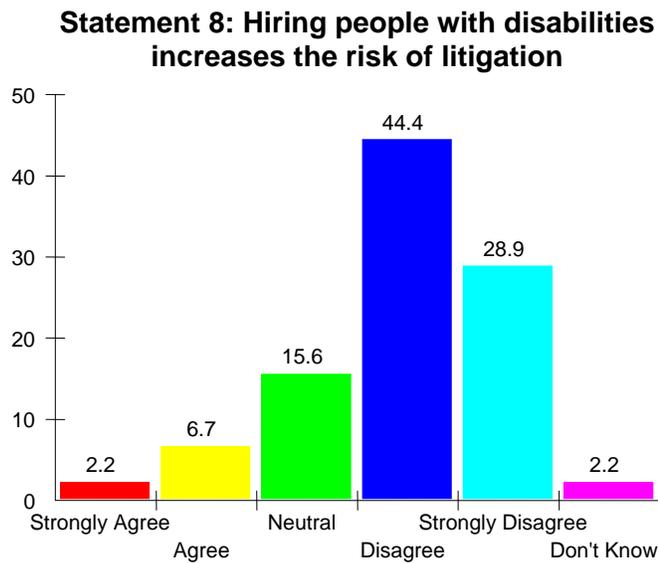
The next statement under the legal and safety issues asked if “hiring people with disabilities raises additional safety concerns.” Nearly half of the public managers (46.6 percent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Figure 10 displays the responses to this question. Furthermore, more than one-third (35.6 percent) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this question by staying neutral in their selection. Therefore, these data suggest that additional safety concerns do not seem to be a major barrier to public employment among the sample of 45 Georgia public managers.

Figure 10



The final statement in the legal and safety section asked managers' opinion on whether "hiring people with disabilities increases the risk of litigation." Figure 11 shows that almost three-fourths of the respondents (73.3 percent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, less than 10 percent (8.9 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with this question. Thus, the risk of litigation does not seem to be a significant barrier to hiring people with disabilities in Georgia local government agencies. The results were similar to findings in both the Bobby Dodd Institute's survey in Georgia, and the Work Trends' national survey of private managers showing 5 percent and 4 percent, respectively, listing the risk of litigation as a barrier to employment (Bobby Dodd Institute, 2006, 22; Dixon, Kruse, and Van Horn, 2003, 22).

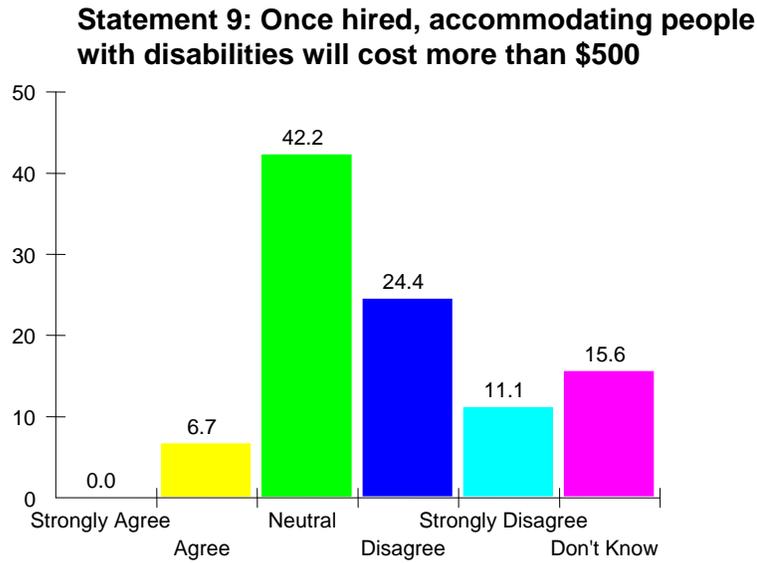
Figure 11



Financial Concerns

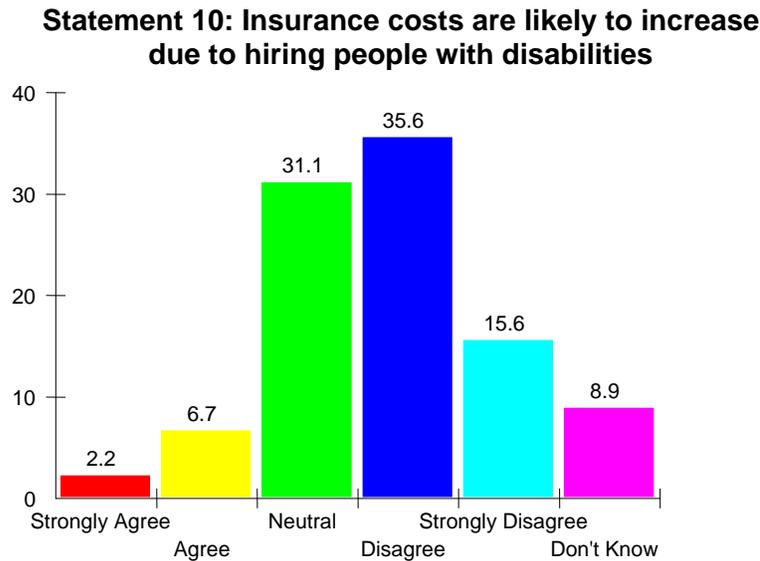
A review of the literature suggested that the potential costs in hiring people with disabilities could be a major barrier to employment in the private sector. In statement nine, public managers were asked if “once hired, accommodating people with disabilities will cost more than \$500.” Approximately forty percent (42.2 percent) of the respondents were neutral in their response, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this statement. In addition, nearly forty percent of the other respondents (35.5 percent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this question. In the Work Trends’ survey, the vast majority (73 percent) of employers reported that their workers with disabilities did not require accommodations (Dixon, Kruse, and Van Horn, 2003, 2). These results are in contrast to employer assumptions highlighted in previous research regarding the higher costs associated with accommodating people with disabilities. Therefore, the cost of accommodations does not seem to be a major barrier to employment in Georgia local government. Figure 12 highlights the responses to statement nine.

Figure 12



For statement 10 in the survey, researchers asked if “insurance costs are likely to increase due to hiring people with disabilities.” As shown in Figure 13, more than half (51.2 percent) of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and an additional 31.1 percent were neutral about this statement, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. In combination to the responses in question nine, financial issues do not seem to be a concern in hiring people with disabilities by public managers in Georgia.

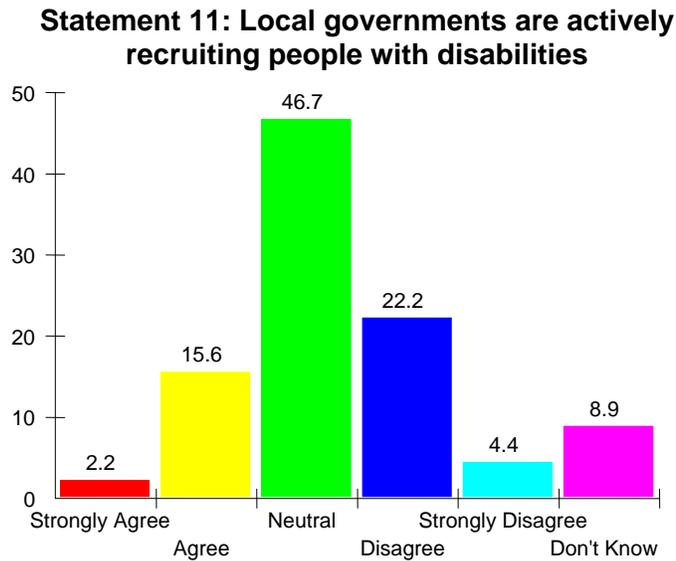
Figure 13



Recruitment Strategies

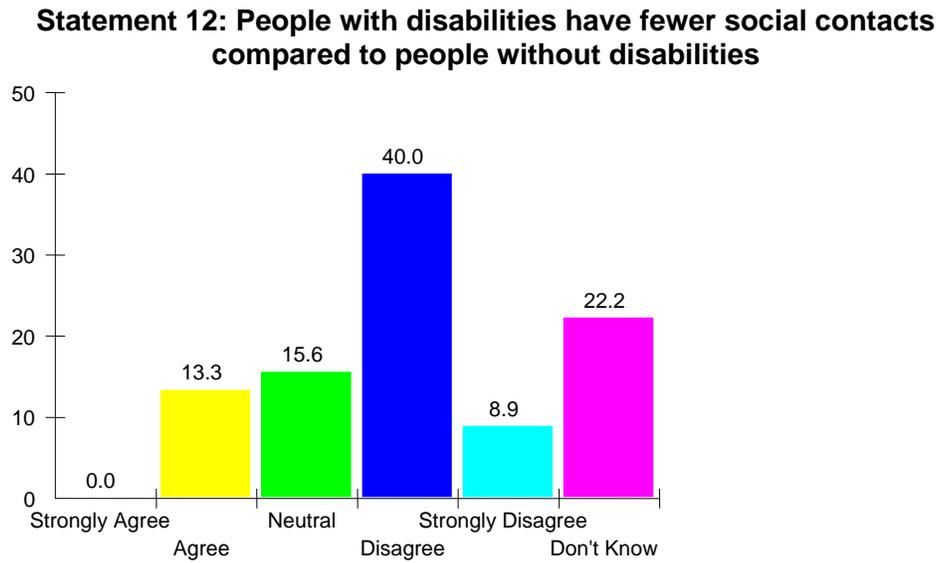
Previous research suggests that recruitment strategies are not targeted toward people with disabilities. Similar problems were faced by minorities and women initially when attempts were made to integrate these populations into the workforce. When Georgia public managers were asked if local governments were actively recruiting people with disabilities, almost 50 percent (46.7 percent) remained neutral on this statement—by not indicating an opinion either way. A quarter (26.6 percent) of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Thus, the lack of recruitment strategies in hiring people with disabilities could be identified as a potential barrier to public employment in Georgia for people with disabilities. Figure 14 displays the breakdown of the 45 responses.

Figure 14



It has been proven that many job opportunities are obtained through the use of social networking and personal contacts. Experts like Blyden Potts have found that people with disabilities have fewer social contacts compared to people without. This research is reinforced by the 1998 Harris Poll which interviewed people with disabilities and found that “31 percent of people with disabilities but only 16 percent of those without disabilities, do not socialize at least once a week with close friends, relatives, or neighbors...it shows that people with disabilities are twice as likely as others to have a limited social life” (Taylor, 1998, 1). When the public managers in Georgia were asked if, in fact, they believed that people with disabilities have fewer social contacts, 48.9 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This demonstrates that Georgia local government managers may have misconceptions regarding the number of social contacts that people with disabilities may have. In addition, Figure 15 also shows that over 20 percent (22.2 percent) of Georgia public managers responded “I don’t know” to this statement.

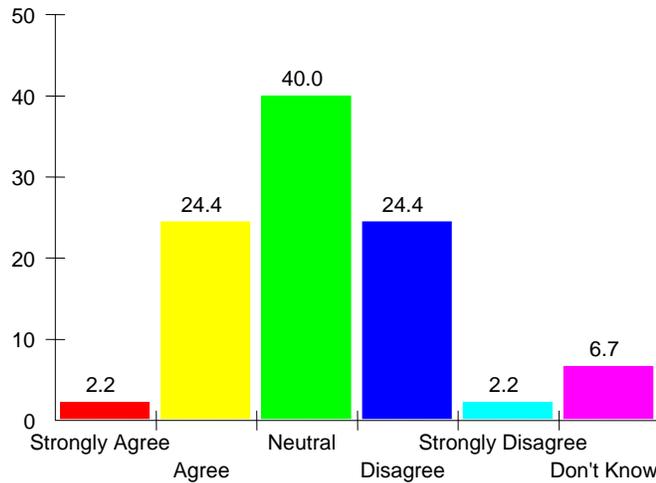
Figure 15



The final statement asked in the section under recruitment strategies was “actively recruiting people with disabilities is a priority for my agency.” As Figure 16 displays, over one-third of the respondents answered neutral to this question (40 percent). The exact same number of respondents strongly agreed/agreed and strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statement at 26.6 percent. Almost 7 percent (6.7 percent) were not sure if they had strategies in place to specifically recruit people with disabilities.

Figure 16

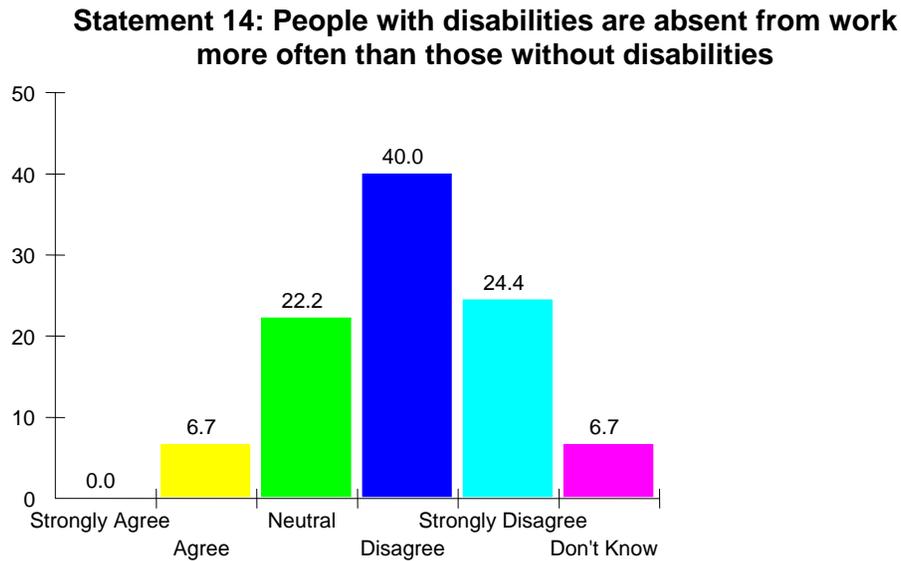
Statement 13: Actively recruiting people with disabilities is a priority for my agency



Attendance

Question 14 is the first statement under the attendance section of the survey and asked respondents whether or not “people with disabilities are absent from work more often than those without disabilities.” The results from the survey given to Georgia public managers revealed that almost two-thirds (64.4 percent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. In addition, 22.2 percent responded neutral to this statement. As Figure 17 illustrates, the majority of respondents thought that absenteeism among people with disabilities is not a barrier to employment in Georgia local government.

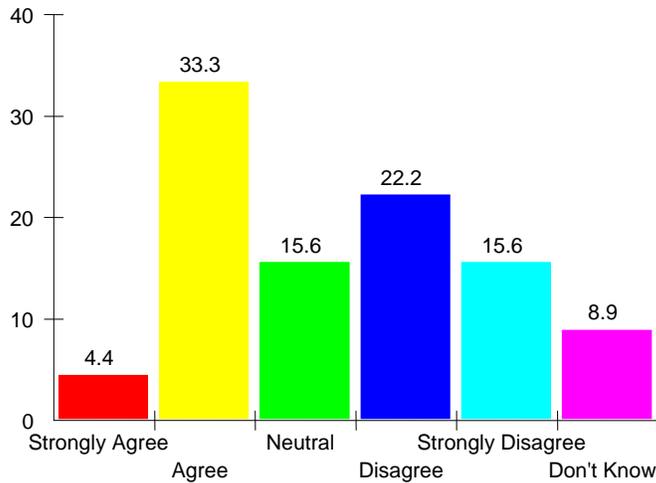
Figure 17



Under the attendance section of the survey, researchers also wanted to know if “finding adequate transportation to work is a challenge for people with disabilities.” Among the sample of Georgia public managers, the responses were evenly distributed at approximately 38 percent between strongly agreed/agreed and strongly disagreed/disagreed. Figure 18 illustrates the respondent’s answers. Data show that lack of transportation is a barrier for people with disabilities. For instance, according to the 1998 Harris Poll, “people with disabilities are almost twice as likely as people without disabilities to say that inadequate transportation is a problem (30 percent compared to 17 percent)” (Taylor, 1998, 1). In addition, researchers Fabian, Ethridge and Beveridge cite a 2001 report by Loprest and Maag on adults with self-reported limitations that “identified transportation and access to job information as being the top-ranked barriers for their sample” (Fabian, Ethridge, and Beveridge, 2009, 42). Given this information and the survey results, lack of transportation may be considered a potential barrier by public managers in Georgia to the employment of people with disabilities.

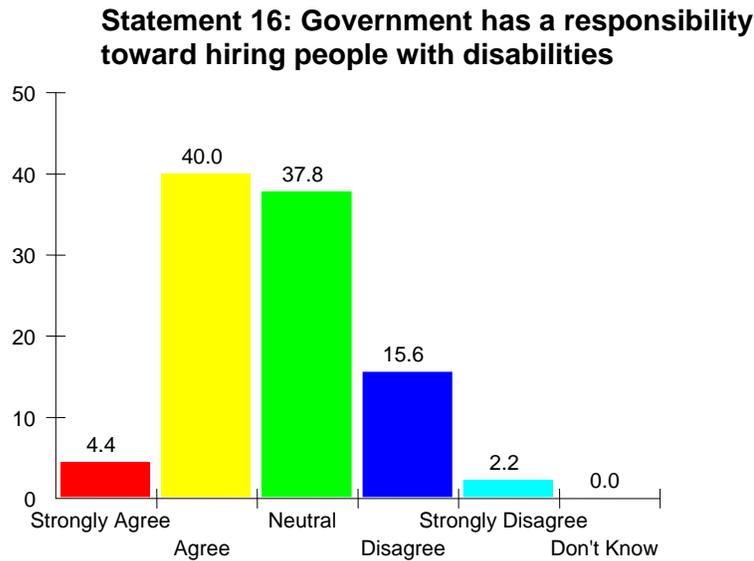
Figure 18

Statement 15: Finding adequate transportation to work is a challenge for people with disabilities



The last statement on the survey (see Figure 19) asked the respondents if they thought that “government has a responsibility toward hiring people with disabilities.” Of the 45 public managers surveyed, nearly half (44.4 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Figure 19 also shows that another 17.8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and over one-third of the respondents (37.8 percent) answered neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. The fact that almost half of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement implies that Georgia public managers recognize the role of government as a model employer in improving the employment situation among people with disabilities. Similar to positive steps undertaken by the government in hiring minorities and women, government should show leadership in addressing concerns of this population.

Figure 19



Agency Size and Barriers

Previous studies, including the surveys conducted by the Bobby Dodd Institute and Rutgers University, have suggested that there is a relationship between certain barriers to employment for people with disabilities and the size of an organization. Researchers selected three variables and compared them to agency size in an effort to further classify barriers and determine the connection between the size of an organization, as determined by the number of employees. The variables selected to be compared with the size of the organizations were: knowledge about the Georgia State Use Program, cost of accommodations, and active recruitment strategies.

By comparing the smallest size agencies that have between 0 to 50 employees and the largest size agencies with more than 200 employees, on the knowledge about the Georgia State Use program, researchers attempted to identify if a relationship exists between the size of an agency (the independent variable) as depicted by the number of employees and the knowledge about the Georgia State Use Program (the dependent variable). The research and null hypotheses are as follows:

Research Hypothesis, H_1 = Relationship exists between size of an agency and the knowledge of Georgia State Use program.

Null Hypothesis, H_0 = No relationship exists between the size of an agency and the knowledge of Georgia State Use Program.

A cross tabulation (see Table 1) between the two variables shows that no relationship exists between the size of an agency and the knowledge of the Georgia State Use Program, since the column percentages do not highlight any strong relationship. Instead, the percentages are spread across the different sizes, as shown in the report below, suggesting that no relationship exists between the two variables in this sample.

This lack of relationship is confirmed when looking at the chi-squared test measures of association. For instance, Cramer's V at 0.338203 shows a weak association. With alpha set at 0.05, there is a 95 percent accuracy or 5 percent error. The statistics are set up to test the null hypothesis; therefore if we reject the null we may be able to accept the research hypothesis. With probability level of 0.507822, it is much larger than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, implying that no relationship exists between the size of an agency and its knowledge about the Georgia State Use Program.

Table 1

Cross Tabulation Report- Column Percentages Section

Knowledge About the Georgia State Use Program

	0-50	51-100	101-150	151-200	200+
0 I Don't Know	12.5	28.6	22.2	0.0	25.0
1 Strongly Disagree	12.5	0.0	11.1	50.0	12.5
2 Disagree	12.5	42.9	11.1	50.0	43.8
3 Neutral	12.5	14.3	33.3	0.0	0.0
4 Agree	37.5	14.3	22.2	0.0	18.8
5 Strongly Agree	12.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of rows with at least one missing value is 3

Cross Tabulation Report

Chi-Square Statistics Section

Chi-Square	19.216097	
Degrees of Freedom	20	
Probability Level	0.507822	Accept H0
Phi	0.676407	
Cramer's V	0.338203	
Pearson's Contingency Coefficient	0.560273	
Tschuprow's T	0.319853	
Lambda A .. Rows dependent	0.137931	
Lambda B .. Columns dependent	0.153846	
Symmetric Lambda	0.145455	
Kendall's tau-B	-0.150987	
Kendall's tau-B (with correction for ties)	-0.193234	
Kendall's tau-C	-0.176871	
Gamma	-0.246212	

WARNING: At least one cell had an expected value less than 5.

The second variable that the researchers evaluated was the relationship between the cost of accommodations for people with disabilities in the workplace and the size of the organization. The researchers were interested to see if the answers to the statement regarding the cost of accommodations for people with disabilities varied by the size of the city or county agency. Using the demographic information on the number of people employed within the local governments, a cross tabulation report was generated by comparing the answers of the smaller cities and counties (0 to 50 people employed) to the larger cities and counties (200+ people employed). The research and null hypothesis are as follows:

Research Hypothesis, H_1 : A relationship exists between the size of a government agency and the responses to the statement “once hired, accommodating people with disabilities will cost more than \$500.”

Null Hypothesis, H_0 : No relationship exists between the size of a government agency and the responses to the statement “once hired, accommodating people with disabilities will cost more than \$500.”

As Table 2 below illustrates that there is little evidence to support the research hypothesis that a relationship exists between these two variables. The chi square test measures the association between the two variables. Cramer's V adjusts for the sample size. The 0.326933 value of Cramer's V shows a weak association between the variables because zero represents no relationship and one shows a strong relationship. The value is not close to either zero or one to determine a relationship. Before performing the cross tabulation, the alpha level was set at 0.05, meaning that there is a 5 percent chance of rejecting a null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is true (Type 1 error). The probability level of 0.256449 indicates that the two variables are not related. The probability level is larger than the alpha level (0.05) and the null hypothesis is accepted, implying that in this sample there is no relationship between the size of an agency and the responses to the statement regarding the cost of accommodations.

Table 2

Cross Tabulation Report- Column Percentages Section

Accommodations

	0 to 50	51 to 100	101 to 150	151 to 200	200+
0 I Don't Know	25.0	14.3	11.1	50.0	10.5
1 Strongly Disagree	25.0	0.0	11.1	0.0	10.5
2 Disagree	0.0	0.0	11.1	50.0	47.4
3 Neutral	50.0	71.4	55.6	0.0	26.3
4 Agree	0.0	14.3	11.1	0.0	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of rows with at least one missing value is 0

Cross Tabulation Report

Chi-Square Statistics Section

Chi-Square	19.239313	
Degrees of Freedom	16	
Probability Level	0.256449	Accept H0
Phi	0.653866	
Cramer's V	0.326933	
Pearson's Contingency Coefficient	0.547261	
Tschuprow's T	0.326933	
Lambda A .. Rows dependent	0.192308	
Lambda B .. Columns dependent	0.000000	
Symmetric Lambda	0.096154	
Kendall's tau-B	-0.073737	
Kendall's tau-B (with correction for ties)	-0.099795	
Kendall's tau-C	-0.090123	
Gamma	-0.132969	
Kappa reliability test	-0.060345	
Kappa's standard error	0.055536	
Kappa's t value	-1.086582	
McNemar's Test Statistic	25.533333	
McNemar's Degrees of Freedom	10	
McNemar's Probability Level	0.004421	

WARNING: At least one cell had an expected value less than 5.

The final variable that was compared to the size of the organizations was the prioritization of recruitment strategies among the agencies. Previous studies by the Bobby Dodd Institute's survey and others have revealed that although many agencies do not have specific recruitment strategies for hiring people with disabilities, larger agencies generally tend to have better recruitment strategies for targeted groups. The researchers also tested this hypothesis for the sample of Georgia public managers by comparing the responses of large cities and counties (those employing 200+ people) to smaller cities and counties (those employing between 0 and 50 people). The research hypothesis and null hypothesis are stated as follows:

Research Hypothesis, H_1 : A relationship exists between the size of the city or county agency and the positive response to the statement "actively recruiting people with disabilities is a priority for my agency."

Null Hypothesis, H_0 : There is no relationship between the size of the city or county agency and the positive response to the statement “actively recruiting people with disabilities is a priority for my agency.”

As shown below in Table 3, there is little evidence to support the research hypothesis that there is a relationship between the size of the organization and a positive response to the statement about whether or not the agency prioritizes actively on recruiting people with disabilities in Georgia government. The null hypothesis is accepted that in this sample, no relationship exists between the size of an agency and the positive response to actively recruiting people with disabilities. The lack of relationship is further confirmed with the weak Cramer' V of 0.313313. In addition, with alpha value set at 0.05, the probability level is much greater than it at 0.609155. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3

Cross Tabulation Report- Column Percentages Section

Actively Recruiting People with Disabilities and Agency Size

	0 to 50	51 to 100	101 to 150	151 to 200	200+
0 I Don't Know	37.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.3
1 Strongly Disagree	0.0	0.0	11.1	0.0	5.3
2 Disagree	0.0	14.3	33.3	50.0	26.3
3 Neutral	37.5	71.4	44.4	50.0	42.1
4 Agree	25.0	14.3	11.1	0.0	15.8
5 Strongly Agree	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of rows with at least one missing value is 0

Cross Tabulation Report

Chi-Square Statistics Section

Chi-Square	17.669721	
Degrees of Freedom	20	
Probability Level	0.609155	Accept H0
Phi	0.626626	
Cramer's V	0.313313	
Pearson's Contingency Coefficient	0.530990	
Tschuprow's T	0.296313	
Lambda A .. Rows dependent	0.000000	
Lambda B .. Columns dependent	0.076923	
Symmetric Lambda	0.040000	
Kendall's tau-B	0.009091	
Kendall's tau-B (with correction for ties)	0.012502	
Kendall's tau-C	0.010667	
Gamma	0.017408	
WARNING: At least one cell had an expected value less than 5.		

Contrary to previous studies done in the private sector, no relationship was identified among the public agency size and the three variables selected. Additional research with a larger sample size of public managers may reveal more information whether or not a relationship exists in the public sector.

Conclusion

Currently, the employment situation is difficult for many considering the state of the economy. For some groups, this situation is further worsened because of societal misconceptions. Although attempts have been made by federal and local governments to help encourage the employment of these populations, people with disabilities are one such group that is often overlooked. Studies throughout the past decade have attempted to pinpoint the reasons why many people with disabilities find it more difficult to secure employment than people without disabilities. The large majority of these studies have concentrated on the private sector. This research attempted to test similar barriers to employment for people with disabilities in the public sector by surveying public managers in Georgia. It is important to note that, as with any

large population group, people with disabilities are unique individuals and not all of them would face the same challenges in finding work. The survey asked the Georgia public managers questions ranging from knowledge about current programs for encouraging the employment of people with disabilities to the existence of recruitment strategies for hiring them. The surveys were sent to 200 managers in Georgia local government and the research summarizes the responses of the 45 managers that participated in the survey. Although the research did not survey people with disabilities, the researchers have incorporated previously documented opinions of people with disabilities throughout this study.

Among the many already identified barriers to employment of people with disabilities, the research revealed that several of these barriers did not pose any obstacles to employment in Georgia. The findings showed that Georgia governments are up to date on the federal ADA laws which include the equal opportunity for people with disabilities in seeking employment, in the use of state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). In addition, while previous studies suggested that a small percentage of managers in the private sector may avoid hiring a person with a disability because of the increased risk of litigation or other safety issues, the Georgia public managers surveyed in this study did not view legal or safety concerns as a reason for not hiring people with disabilities in their agencies. In both national and local studies, managers in the private sector also cited that people with disabilities may cost more to employ because of the increase in health insurance payments and the costs of accommodations in the workplace. When asked about financial concerns such as these, the respondents in local government did not believe that insurance costs are likely to increase by hiring people with disabilities or that they would require costly modifications to the workplace (more than 500 dollars). Overall, Georgia local

government managers were knowledgeable about the seriousness of the employment situation for people with disabilities and recognized the fact that employing people with disabilities saves taxpayers and local governments money. However, despite the considerable knowledge, and largely positive responses regarding hiring people with disabilities, Georgia local managers are not currently taking initiatives to remedy the employment situation of this group.

The survey results do highlight several potential barriers to public employment in Georgia for people with disabilities that are similar to the barriers in the private sector. Discrimination has been identified as a barrier to employment by experts and researchers, organizations like the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and people with disabilities. Although discrimination may still exist for people of minority races or ethnicities, most employers have recognized that these differing characteristics have no relation to an individual's abilities. However, some believe that the mere fact of having a disability may communicate important information about a person's potential and limitations. When asked if the person's disability affects his or her ability to work, only 11.1 percent of the managers sampled either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. In the sample, the responses did not seem to differ among the size of the city or county agency. The local government managers agreed that while people with disabilities may be discriminated against in hiring practices in general (71.1 percent either strongly agreed or agreed), they did not believe that discrimination is related to the person's perceived limitations on the job. A person with a visible disability may face prejudice, and may often be put into a different category if the person's disability becomes the primary focus. Discrimination toward this group exists in other forms that may include preconceived notions about their behaviors or intellectual skills. Although government agencies

and private companies are required to consider people with disabilities in the candidate pool, discrimination still exists in all sectors.

Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and other such laws prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities, attempts to encourage the employment of people with disabilities have been made both at the federal and state level. In Georgia, the Georgia State Use Program is one such incentive created to encourage both small and large counties and cities in Georgia to purchase products and services from companies that prioritize employing people with disabilities. Of the 45 managers sampled, the majority indicated that they were not aware of this state program. These responses also did not seem to vary by either the size of the city or county agency. The research revealed that there is a lack of knowledge among the managers about the Georgia State Use Program. This program, designed to keep people with disabilities employed, will not be successful in the long-term if the majority of the local public managers do not know about it.

The lack of targeted recruitment strategies for hiring people with disabilities has also traditionally been a hindrance to employment for this group. When asked if local governments were actively recruiting people with disabilities, nearly half answered neutral (46.7 percent). In addition, regarding their agency prioritizing hiring people with disabilities, nearly one-third either disagreed or strongly disagreed (26.6 percent) and 40 percent answered neutral. These results indicate that of the Georgia public managers surveyed, recruiting people with disabilities is not a priority for agencies and these answers did not differ when the sizes of the agencies were compared. Furthermore, Georgia public managers were under the false impression that people with disabilities are well connected socially as people without disabilities. Nearly 50 percent (48.9 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed and 22.2 percent responded “I don’t know” to the

statement that people with disabilities have fewer social contacts. As job seekers are always advised, social contacts and networking are important vehicles to learning about open positions, and obtaining the opportunity to apply. Combined with lack of targeted recruitment strategies and misconceptions about social contacts, the employment situation for people with disabilities in local government is not likely to improve in the near future.

Another barrier to employment for people with disabilities that has often been cited is absenteeism. Employers may not want to hire someone that they believe will miss work more often because of health complications or the lack of access to transportation. The majority of the respondents in the sample believed that people with disabilities are not absent from work more than people without disabilities, however, 37.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed that finding transportation to work is a challenge for people with disabilities. Therefore, broader strategies to improve transportation for all segments of the population, including people with disabilities, need to be considered.

Recommendations

Experts such as Potts (2005) discuss some of the current approaches to increasing employment of people with disabilities including addressing accessibility, educating employers against negative stereotypes, and providing job training and other skills to people with disabilities (Potts, 2005, 20). In general, diversity training programs have been an important step in increasing the knowledge and awareness of managers about people with disabilities and reducing discrimination of this group in all sectors. For Georgia public managers, trainings can focus on dispelling myths as well as addressing the preconceived notions that some employers may have before hiring people with disabilities. Training programs should also incorporate

statistics on the advantages of hiring people with disabilities, especially for local government, and information about saving government money and incentive programs such as Georgia State Use. These trainings should be mandatory for all public managers. Currently, the Georgia Department of Labor's Vocational Rehabilitation unit provides training for various government and private agencies, however, trainings need to be more frequent and widely available.

Unfortunately, many managers are unaware about the Georgia State Use Program. Recommendations to increase the utilization of the Georgia State Use Program include developing a list of items and services that have competitive prices through this program, and encouraging local governments to use this resource as a vendor of first choice. The variety of services and products provided by the Georgia State Use Program include: custodial, landscaping, data entry, first aid kits, printer cartridges, and cleaning supplies. Increasing awareness about this purchasing program can indirectly improve employment opportunities for Georgia residents with disabilities. In addition to this state program, Georgia local government agencies should also promote partnerships with nonprofit organizations targeting employment of people with disabilities such as the Bobby Dodd Institute, WorkTec, and the Tommy Nobis Center. These organizations were created to increase job training and provide employment to people with disabilities with the long-term goal of reducing their dependence on public assistance.

With the current barriers highlighted in the sample of local Georgia public managers in the employment of people with disabilities, nearly 50 percent (44.4 percent) of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed that government has a responsibility toward hiring people with disabilities. This illustrates that managers in our sample recognize that government has a role to play as a model employer, and it is encouraging given the importance of bureaucratic

representation of all groups in government. Researchers recommend for the state government to take an active leadership role in encouraging the hiring of people with disabilities within the county and city agencies in Georgia. If people with disabilities are to be represented in Georgia local government agencies, recruitment strategies need to be improved and managers educated about the fewer social contacts and networks that people with disabilities have. Increased recruitment strategies for local government may include partnerships with disability focused student organizations at local colleges and universities. For example, local government agencies could partner with Kennesaw State University's ABLE organization for internships and perhaps future employment. Also, local government agencies in Georgia could promote job opportunities by setting up a booth display at conferences targeted toward people with disabilities.

In conjunction with these strategies, public managers should also be educated about the social isolation facing many people with disabilities. Potts stresses the need to focus on deeply rooted issues such as the fewer social relationships that people with disabilities have by "building prospective employees social capital" (Potts, 2005, 23). This essential skill is often omitted from job training programs for people with disabilities, but this type of social networking could be incorporated into training techniques to further the possibility of employment for people with disabilities.

Local governments must be strategic in addressing the transportation barriers that have been identified. Changing employer perceptions about the lack of access to transportation for people with disabilities will also have to be included in various training programs, however, there are several possible strategies to improve the accessibility to transportation. These

strategies may include encouraging the use of van or carpools and telecommuting. In the long-term, governments should plan for improved transportation accessibility for all populations.

Although not addressed specifically in the survey because it targeted Georgia local government managers, federal government also has a role to play in resolving currently conflicting disability support programs. By making adjustments to the complex and conflicting government programs, federal government can encourage people with disabilities to work and continue to seek public support as needed.

As highlighted above, the benefits to increasing employment among people with disabilities are numerous and will impact individuals, families, communities, and governments. Supporting the issue that employment can help people with disabilities, Schur lists several benefits for this group, such as increasing income, alleviating poverty, reducing social isolation, increasing community and political participation, eventually reducing alienation and thus leading to the perception of respect in the community (Schur, 2002, 346-347). The nation has made several strides in addressing employment opportunities for racial and ethnic minority groups and women. Now is the time to address the problem that one in five Americans living with a disability face, and to ensure better employment opportunities for these individuals. Georgia local governments must begin by fulfilling its obligation as model employers, and actively complying to ensure representation of people with disabilities in the public workforce. Improving the understanding of these identified barriers and the recommendations are a starting point to reducing the disparity in employment rates for people with disabilities.

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Appendix 1: Cover Letter and Survey Instrument

December 15, 2009

Dear Local Government Staff Member:

Your assistance is requested to improve our understanding of employment opportunities for people with disabilities in local governments in Georgia. This project is being conducted by students at Kennesaw State University's Master of Public Administration Program. We request your participation in completing the attached survey either via email, telephone or in-person. You have been selected as a volunteer participant since you work in local government in the State of Georgia. You will not be contacted after you complete this survey and your views will not have individual identity markers. Furthermore, the information you share will be kept confidential.

The research project titled, "Employment of People with Disabilities in Georgia Local Governments: Identifying Barriers to Employment" will help to advance future employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This survey is the first step in understanding the current climate in hiring and recruiting people with disabilities in local governments in Georgia.

The survey contains approximately 20 questions and should take between 10-15 minutes to complete. The questions focus on current knowledge and awareness about the employment situation for people with disabilities, recruitment strategies, and perceived barriers in the employment of these individuals. After receiving all the results, a report will be compiled. The report is expected to be available online through Kennesaw State University's website (www.kennesaw.edu) in June 2010.

Thank you for participating in the survey.

The purpose of this research has been explained and my participation is voluntary. I have the right to stop participating any time without penalty. I understand that the research has no known risks, and I will not be identified. By completing this survey, I am agreeing to participate in this research project. Minors will not be permitted to participate in this survey

THIS PAGE MAY BE REMOVED AND KEPT BY EACH PARTICIPANT

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to Dr. Ginny Q. Zhan, Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, #2202, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (770) 423-6679.

Sincerely,

Natasha Singh and Laura Creamer

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404-944-2131

Employment of People with Disabilities Survey

Your assistance is requested in helping to improve our understanding of the employment of people with disabilities in local governments in Georgia. Please complete the following survey by indicating your response with an 'X' in the appropriate column.

Employment of People with Disabilities	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Don't Know
Knowledge						
At present, the employment situation for people with disabilities is serious.						
Hiring people with disabilities saves taxpayers/government money.						
I am knowledgeable about the Georgia State Use Program.						
Awareness						
People with disabilities may be discriminated against in hiring practices.						
Having a disability impacts the person's ability to work.						
Legal & Safety Issues						
My agency is up to date on current changes to laws impacting people with disabilities.						
Hiring people with disabilities raises additional safety concerns at the workplace.						
Hiring people with disabilities increases the risk of litigation.						
Financial Concerns						
Once hired, accommodating people with disabilities will cost more than \$500.						
Insurance costs are likely to increase due to hiring people with disabilities.						
Recruitment Strategies						
Local governments are actively recruiting people with disabilities.						
People with disabilities have fewer social contacts compared to people without disabilities.						
Actively recruiting people with disabilities is a priority for my agency.						
Attendance						
People with disabilities are absent from work more often than those without disabilities.						
Finding adequate transportation to work is a challenge for people with disabilities.						
Overall						
Government has a responsibility toward hiring people with disabilities.						

Additional Questions:

How many people do you currently employ?
 0-50 51-100 101-150 151-200 200+

What percentage of these employees have a disability?
 0-5% 6-10% 11-15% 16-20% More than 20%

What is the unemployment rate for people with disabilities in Georgia?
 0-10 11-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71-80 80+

How would you classify your agency?
 City County State Other

Thank you for your participation in this survey! Please return to disabilitysurvey@yahoo.com

Appendix 2: Survey Results

Survey instrument (see appendix 1) was sent to human resource, city, assistant city, and county managers in Georgia working in local governments. 200 surveys were sent out. The following reflect the results of the survey.

Knowledge and Awareness

Q1. At present, the employment situation for people with disabilities is serious

N = 45

Strongly Agree 17.8%

Agree 44.4 %

Neutral 17.8 %

Disagree 4.4 %

Strongly Disagree 2.2 %

I Don't Know 13.3 %

Q2. Hiring people with disabilities saves taxpayers/government money.

N = 44

Strongly Agree 13.6%

Agree 38.6%

Neutral 27.3 %

Disagree 9.1%

Strongly Disagree 2.3%

I Don't Know 9.1%

Not Answered- 1 survey

Q3. I am knowledgeable about the Georgia State Use Program.

N = 42

Strongly Agree 2.4%

Agree 21.4%

Neutral 11.9%

Disagree 31%

Strongly Disagree 11.9%

I Don't Know 21.4 %

Not Answered- 3 surveys

Q4. People with disabilities may be discriminated against in hiring practices.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 17.8%

Agree 53.3%

Neutral 11.1%

Disagree 6.7%

Strongly Disagree 11.1%

I Don't Know 0%

Q5. Having a disability impacts the person's ability to work.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 2.2%

Agree 8.9%

Neutral 24.4%

Disagree 44.4%

Strongly Disagree 20%

I Don't Know 0%

Legal and Safety Issues

Q6. My agency is up to date on current changes to laws impacting people with disabilities.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 11.1%

Agree 66.7%

Neutral 15.6%

Disagree 2.2%

Strongly Disagree 2.2%

I Don't Know 2.2%

Q7. Hiring people with disabilities raises additional safety concerns at the workplace

N = 45

Strongly Agree 0%

Agree 17.8%

Neutral 35.6%

Disagree 33.3%

Strongly Disagree 13.3%

I Don't Know 0%

Q8. Hiring people with disabilities increases the risk of litigation.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 2.2%

Agree 6.7%

Neutral 15.6%

Disagree 44.4%

Strongly Disagree 28.9%

I Don't Know 2.2%

Financial Concerns

Q9. Once hired, accommodating people with disabilities will cost more than \$500.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 0%

Agree 6.7%

Neutral 42.2%

Disagree 24.4%

Strongly Disagree 11.1%

I Don't Know 15.6%

Q10. Insurance costs are likely to increase due to hiring people with disabilities.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 2.2%

Agree 6.7%

Neutral 31.1%

Disagree 35.6%

Strongly Disagree 15.6%

I Don't Know 8.9%

Recruitment Strategies

Q11 Local governments are actively recruiting people with disabilities.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 2.2%

Agree 15.6%

Neutral 46.7%

Disagree 22.2%

Strongly Disagree 4.4%

I Don't Know 8.9%

Q12. People with disabilities have fewer social contacts compared to people without disabilities.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 0%

Agree 13.3%

Neutral 15.6%

Disagree 40%

Strongly Disagree 8.9%

I Don't Know 22.2%

Q13. Actively recruiting people with disabilities is a priority for my agency.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 2.2%

Agree 24.4%

Neutral 40%

Disagree 24.4%

Strongly Disagree 2.2%

I Don't Know 6.7%

Attendance

Q14. People with disabilities are absent from work more often than those without disabilities.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 0%

Agree 6.7%

Neutral 22.2%

Disagree 40%

Strongly Disagree 24.4%

I Don't Know 6.7%

Q15. Finding adequate transportation to work is a challenge for people with disabilities.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 4.4%

Agree 33.3%

Neutral 15.6%

Disagree 22.2%

Strongly Disagree 15.6%

I Don't Know 8.9%

Overall

Q16. Government has a responsibility toward hiring people with disabilities.

N = 45

Strongly Agree 4.4%

Agree 40%

Neutral 37.8%

Disagree 15.6%

Strongly Disagree 2.2%

I Don't Know 0%

Additional Knowledge Questions

Q17. How many people do you currently employ?

N = 45

0-50 17.8%

51-100 15.6%

101-150 20.0%

151-200 4.4%

200+ 42.2%

Q18. What percentages of these employees have a disability?

N = 38

0-5% 89.5%

6-10% 7.9%

11-15% 0.0%

16-20% 0.0%

20%+ 2.6%

Not Answered-7 surveys

Q19 What is the unemployment rate for people with disabilities in Georgia?

N = 28 The researchers have decided to omit this question from the research as a result of the low response rate.

Q20. How would you classify your agency?

N = 44

City 68.9%

County 31.8%

Not Answered-1 survey