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# Implementation and Effectiveness of Disability-Inclusive Workplace Practices and Policies

**Issue Brief: Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities<sup>1</sup>**

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has long focused on encouraging private sector employers to hire more people with disabilities. The DOL Chief Evaluation Office contracted with Westat to conduct the 2018 Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities to provide a current picture of employer efforts to employ people with disabilities as well as attitudes toward people with disabilities.

The survey was based on a national sample of businesses stratified by industry and company size to enable findings across groups of employers. In this issue brief, we use data from the survey to examine implementation of disability-inclusive recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement policies and practices. We also consider which practices are associated with hiring of people with disabilities.

This brief is one of three on findings from the survey. Others examine the implementation of disability-inclusive workplace practices by federal contractors and employer attitudes toward people with disabilities.

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## Overview

People with disabilities face economic disadvantages including lower employment and lower earnings. In March 2019, the labor force participation rate of people with disabilities age 16 and older was 21.5 percent as compared to 68.5 percent for people without disabilities. Additionally, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 7.9 percent, which is about twice the unemployment rate (3.8%) of those without disabilities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). People with disabilities also earn less than people without disabilities. In 2017, the median annual earnings for full-time/full-year workers with disabilities ages 18 to 64 was \$40,353 compared to \$45,449 for people without disabilities (Houtenville and Boege, 2019).

Workplace practices and policies can facilitate or impede the employment of people with disabilities. Erickson, von Schrader, Bruyère, VanLooy and Matteson (2014) found that 9 practices increased the likelihood of hiring people with disabilities. These included actively recruiting people with disabilities, partnerships with community organizations, diversity plans, explicit goals for hiring people with disabilities, including goals

for hiring people with disabilities in management performance, internships for people with disabilities, senior management commitment, review of online job application accessibility, and advance notice about accommodations in the job application process. Habeck, Rachel, Hunt, and Kregal (2010) found that several retention practices were associated with retention effectiveness, including the provision of development opportunities to employees at every level, seeking the ideas and involvement of employees, and ensuring they know how their work and performance support the mission.

This brief examines the extent to which companies implement disability-inclusive recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement practices and which practices are related to hiring of people with disabilities. This

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## Key Findings

**A majority of companies had accessible interview locations, provided interview accommodations, and posted job announcements that displayed nondiscrimination/equal opportunity policy.**

**Use of five recruitment and hiring practices increased the likelihood of hiring people with disabilities in the past 12 months. These included having measurable goals for hiring people with disabilities, partnerships with organizations, accessible interview locations, active recruitment of people with disabilities, and an accessible online application.**

**Companies were more likely to implement practices to retain and advance people with disabilities than practices to recruit and hire people with disabilities.**

**Most companies implemented only one of the five practices related to hiring—accessible interview locations. Only 30 percent or fewer of companies implemented the other four practices related to hiring.**

issue brief uses data from the 2018 Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities. The survey was designed to provide a current picture of employer efforts to employ people with disabilities as well as attitudes toward people with disabilities. The survey was based on a sample of businesses drawn from a nation-wide directory stratified by industry and company size to enable comparisons across groups of employers.<sup>2</sup> The survey was a 20-minute telephone interview with senior

executives in 12 industries. Interviewing was conducted from July through October 2018. Interviews were completed with 2,023 companies. The response rate was 17.3 percent. All analyses were weighted to account for the sample design and adjust for nonresponse. The sample represents (when weighted) 2,007,574 companies. The survey asked respondents whether their companies implemented eight recruitment and hiring practices and eight retention and advancement practices identified by research as

potentially promising (for reviews see Erickson et al., 2014a; Erickson et al., 2014b). All differences reported are significant at the .05 level.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of responding companies. About half of companies (49.2%) were small (5 to 14 employees), 45.6 percent were medium (15 to 249 employees), and 5.3 percent were large (250 or more employees). Sixteen percent of companies were in the goods-producing sector, 82.0 percent were in the service-providing sector, and 2 percent

<sup>2</sup> The sampling frame for the survey was the Duns Market Identifiers File maintained by Dun & Bradstreet.

**Table 1**

**Characteristics of companies (percentages)**

Company size		Company structure	
Small (5-14)	<b>49.2%</b>	Single location company	<b>86.6%</b>
Medium (15-249)	<b>45.6%</b>	Headquarters	<b>13.4%</b>
Large (250 or more)	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>Subsidiary</b>	
<b>Industry</b>		Yes	<b>4.1%</b>
Goods-producing	<b>16.0%</b>	No	<b>95.8%</b>
Service-providing	<b>82.0%</b>	<b>Census region of headquarters</b>	
Public administration	<b>2.0%</b>	Northeast	<b>19.0%</b>
<b>Federal contractor</b>		Central	<b>25.5%</b>
Yes	<b>6.7%</b>	Southeast	<b>34.4%</b>
No	<b>91.9%</b>	West	<b>21.1%</b>
Don't know/refused	<b>1.4%</b>		

N=2,023 companies

Source: 2018 Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities, Q1, Q2, Q3, Q6, Q10 and Duns Market Identifiers File

**Most companies said that they had accessible interview locations, provide interview accommodations, and posted job announcements that display non-discrimination/equal opportunity policies.**

were in the public administration sector, which includes state and local government. About seven percent of companies said that they were federal contractors.

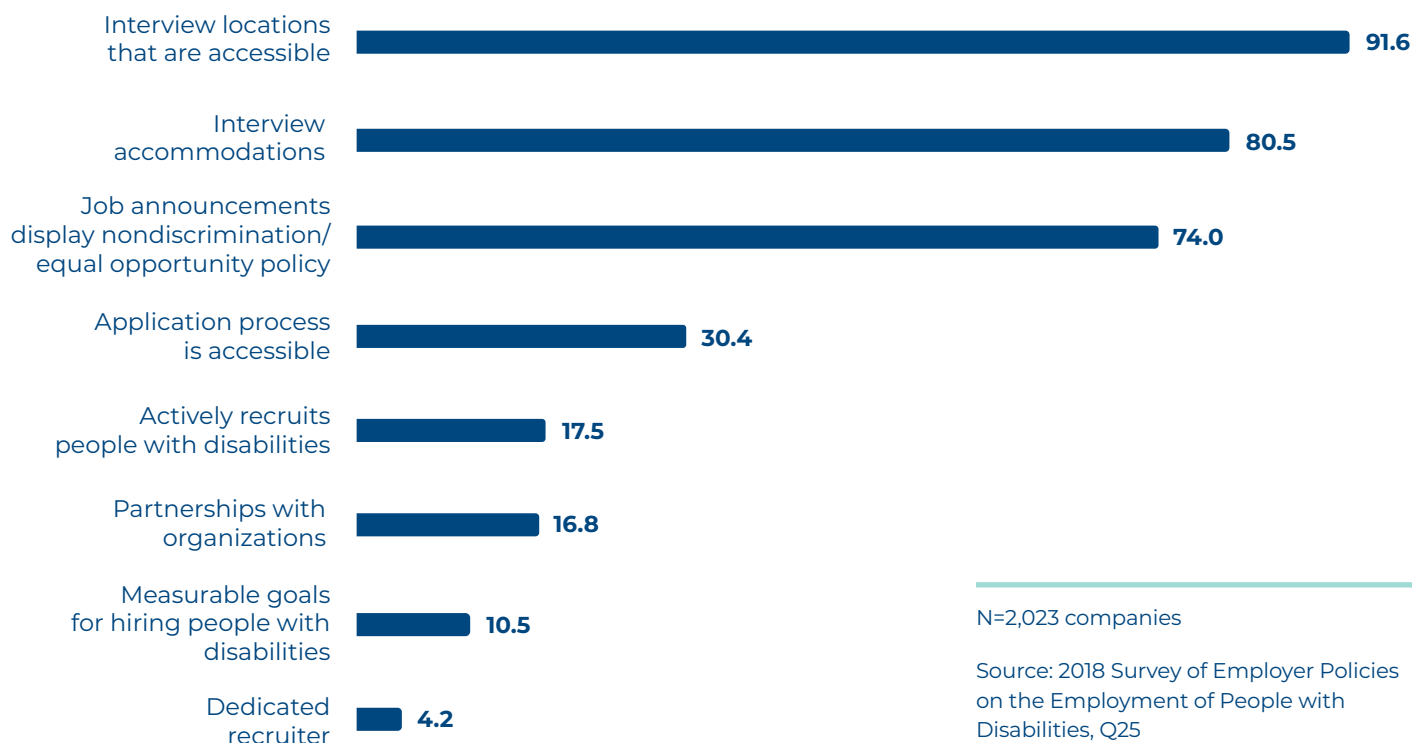
### Recruitment and Hiring Practices

The vast majority of companies (91.6%) indicated they have interview locations that are accessible to all people with disabilities (Figure 1). About 81 percent of companies provided an opportunity for all job interview candidates to request an accommodation for the interview, and 74.0 percent said that they post

job announcements that display a policy of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity. The remaining practices were implemented by 30 percent or less of employers, including having an application process that is accessible to all people with disabilities (30.4%), actively recruiting people with disabilities (17.5%), developing partnerships with organizations to recruit people with disabilities (16.8%), having measurable goals for hiring people with disabilities (10.5%), and having a dedicated recruiter for hiring people with disabilities (4.2%).

Figure 1

Percentage of companies implementing recruitment and hiring practices



N=2,023 companies

Source: 2018 Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities, Q25

We examined differences in implementation of each practice by company size, industry, and federal contractor status. Because these characteristics are interrelated, we used a logistic regression analysis to examine differences. (Appendix Table A.1 includes the unadjusted percentages of companies that implemented each practice by company size, industry, and federal contractor status.) Figure 2 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis predicting the presence of each type of recruitment or hiring practice controlling for company characteristics. We present these results as odds ratios relative to the reference group. The reference groups are small for company size; goods producing for

industry; and non-federal contractors for federal contractor status. Non-federal contractors are companies that answered "no" to the question about federal contractor status. A statistically significant odds ratio of greater than 1 indicates that the company characteristic is associated with a greater likelihood of the practice; an odds ratio of less than 1 indicates that the characteristic is associated with a lower likelihood; and an odds ratio of 1 indicates parity. The figure shows that there were few differences between medium-sized companies and small companies in terms of recruitment and hiring practices, with the exception of job announcements that display non-discrimination/equal opportunity policy; interview accom-

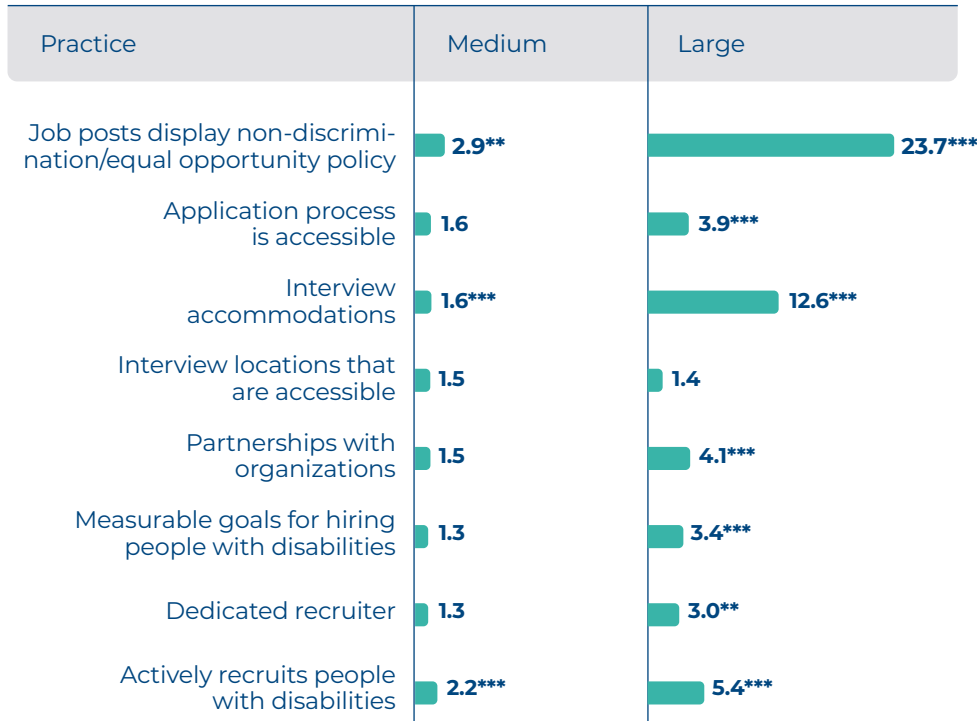
modations; and actively recruits people with disabilities. Large companies were more likely to implement most of the practices than other companies were. Large companies were 3 to 24 times more likely to implement each practice than small companies were. The only practice that was not different was accessible interview locations.

For industry, patterns were less consistent than for company size. Employers in the service-providing and public administration sectors were more likely to implement some of the practices compared to those in the goods-producing sector. The odds of implementing two of the practices—an accessible application process and accessible interview locations—where

Figure 2

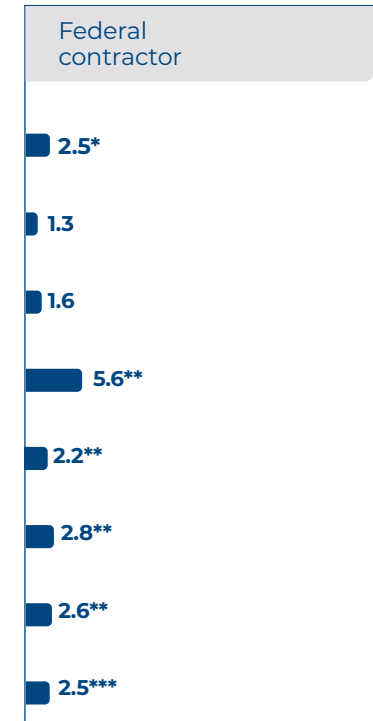
Adjusted odds ratios for the probability that a company has a recruitment or hiring practice

Company size  
(Base=Small)



Federal contractor

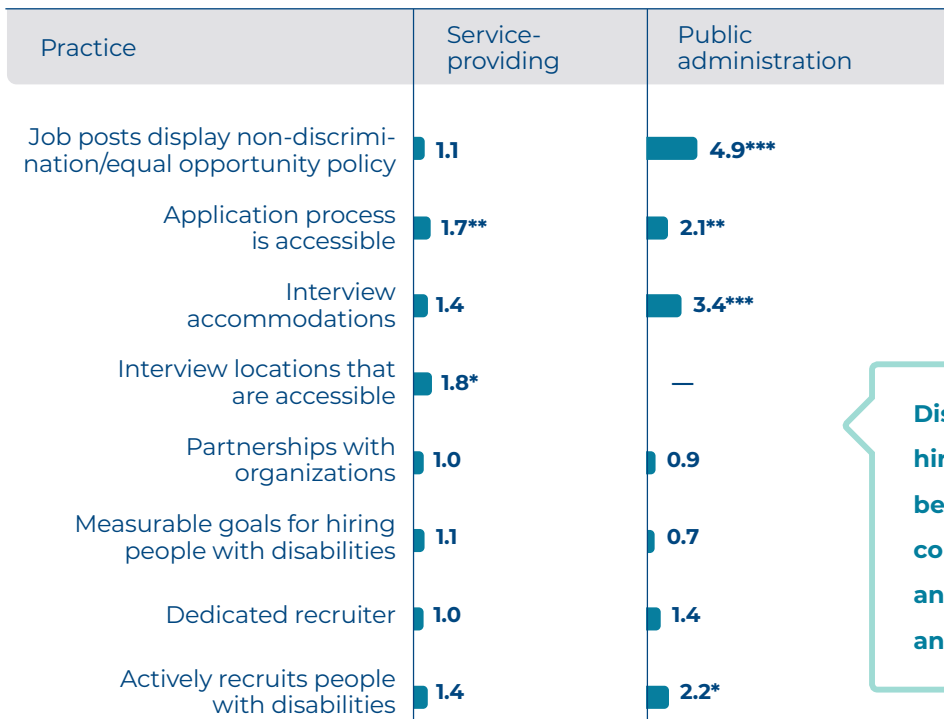
(Base=Non-federal contractors)



\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Industry

(Base=Goods Producing)



Source: 2018 Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities, Q25

Note: Each row represents a separate logistic regression model. “—” indicates that the odds ratio for industry could not be estimated because nearly 100 percent of public administration employers said they had accessible interview locations.

**Disability-inclusive recruitment and hiring practices were more likely to be implemented by large companies, companies in the service-providing and public administration sectors, and federal contractors.**

two times higher for companies in the service-providing sector than for those in the goods-producing sector. Public administration employers were more likely to implement four of the practices. The odds of implementing non-discrimination/equal opportunity policy in job announcements, an accessible application process, interview accommodations, and active recruitment were 2 to 5 times higher for public administration than for goods-producing employers.

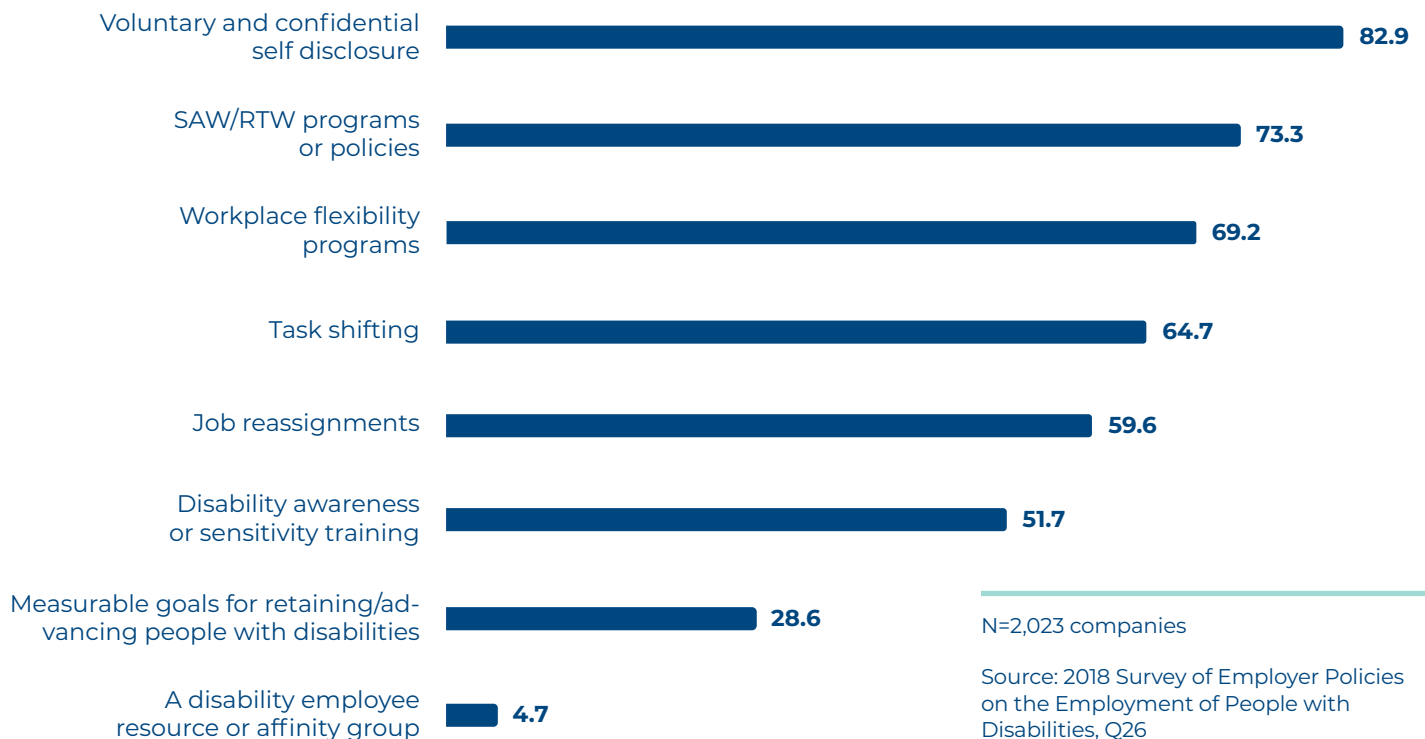
In 2014, the regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 were revised to require government contractors and subcontractors to take affirmative action in the recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of people with disabilities (Office of Federal Contract

Compliance Programs, n.d.). Federal contractors were more likely than all other companies to implement six of the eight practices. Being a federal contractor increased the odds of implementing partnerships with organizations by a factor of 2, displaying nondiscrimination/equal opportunity policy in job announcements, having a dedicated recruiter, and having measurable goals for hiring people with disabilities by a factor of about 3, and having accessible interview locations by a factor of about 6. The only two practices that federal contractors were not more likely to implement were accessible application process and interview accommodations, possibly due to a ceiling effect as the vast majority of companies do these things.

### Retention and Advancement Practices and Policies

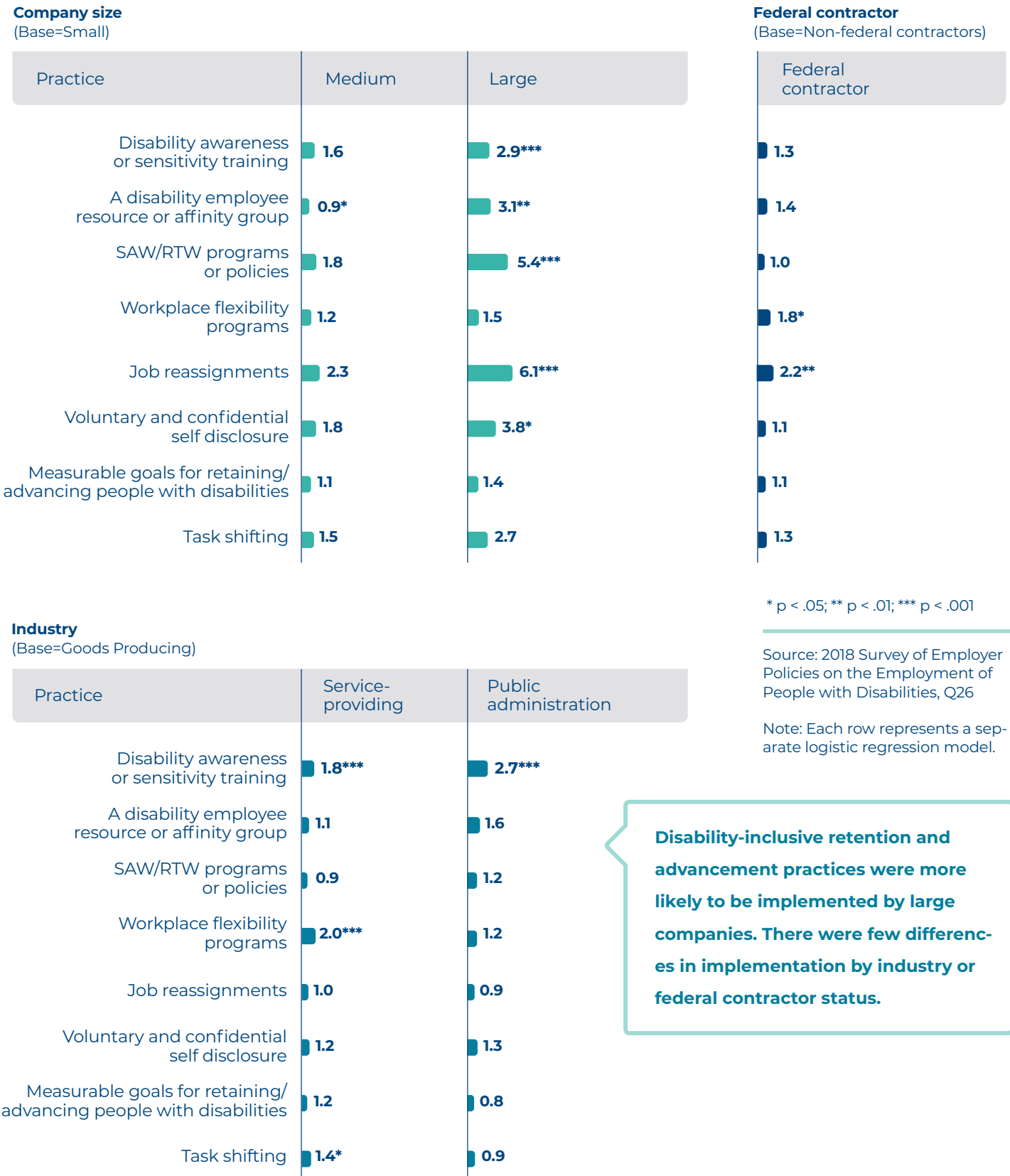
Eighty-three percent of companies had a voluntary and confidential process for people with disabilities to disclose a disability (Figure 3). About three in four employers (73.3%) indicated that they have stay-at-work/return-to-work programs or policies. About two-thirds indicated that they have workplace flexibility programs, such as flextime or telecommuting (69.2%), task shifting (64.7%), and job reassignments (59.6%). About half (51.7%) of employers said that they offered disability awareness or sensitivity training. Just under 30 percent (28.6%) had measurable goals for retaining or advancing people with disabilities, and only 4.7 percent offered a disability employee resource or affinity group.

**Figure 3** Percentage of companies implementing retention and advancement practices



**Figure 4**

**Adjusted odds ratios for the probability that a company has a retention or advancement practice**



We explored what kind of companies are more likely to implement inclusive retention and advancement practices. Figure 4 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis predicting the presence of each type of retention and advancement practice controlling for company characteristics. (Appendix Table A.2 includes the unadjusted percentages.) Medium-sized companies were generally similar to small companies in terms of retention and advancement practices, whereas large companies were more likely to implement five of the eight retention and advancement practices compared to small companies. For large companies, the odds of implementing job reassignments was 6 times higher and stay-at-work/return-to-work programs or policies was 5

times higher than small companies. Similarly, the odds of implementing voluntary and confidential self-disclosure were 4 times higher, and the odds of having a disability employee resource or affinity group and disability awareness or sensitivity training were 3 times higher for large than for small companies. Large companies may simply have more resources and a greater number of job functions to support inclusive practices (Houtenville and Kalargyrou, 2011).

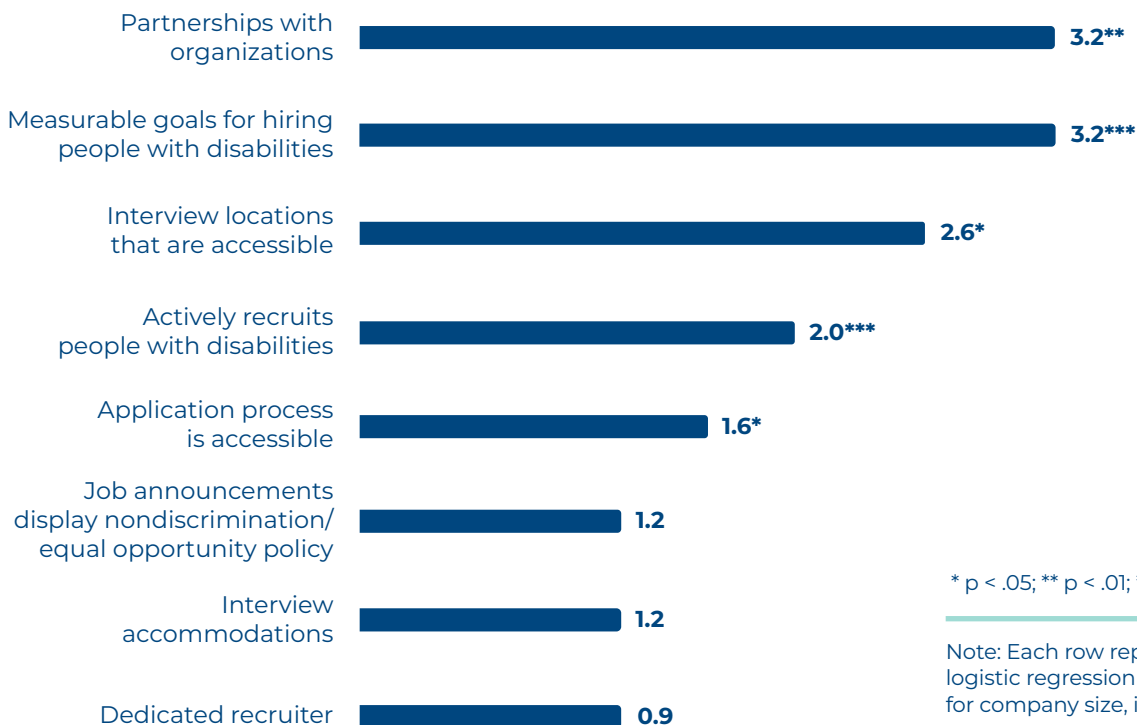
There were few differences by industry once company size was controlled. Employers in the service-providing and public administration sectors were more likely than those in the goods-producing sector to have disability awareness or sensitivity

training. Specifically, the odds for service-providing and public administration employers of having disability awareness or sensitivity training were 2 and 3 times higher, respectively, than those for goods-producing employers. Companies in the service-providing sector were more likely than those in the goods-producing sector to have workplace flexibility policies and task shifting. The odds for companies in the service-providing sector of implementing workplace flexibility policies were 2 times higher and odds of implementing task shifting were 1.4 times higher than companies in the goods-producing sector.

There were few significant differences between federal contractors and non-contractors in terms of retention

Figure 5

**Adjusted odds ratios for the probability that a company hired people with disabilities in the past 12 months based on recruitment and hiring practices**



\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Note: Each row represents a separate logistic regression model that controls for company size, industry, and federal contractor status.



and advancement practices. Being a federal contractor increased the odds of implementing job reassignments and workplace flexibility policies by a factor of 2.

## Hiring People with Disabilities

While the implementation of practices is an important indicator of an inclusive work environment, it is important to know whether practices are related to hiring of people with disabilities. We used a logistic regression analysis to examine the relationship between each recruitment and hiring practice and the hiring of people with disabilities in the past 12 months. We ran separate logistic regressions for each of the eight practices because employers who reported one practice were likely to report other practices, as well. Figure 5 reports the results of the logistic regression models. Five of the eight recruitment and hiring practices were related to hiring of people with disabilities in the past 12 months. Measurable goals for people with disabilities and partnerships with organizations were the practices most strongly related to hiring people with disabilities. Both increased the odds of hiring by a factor of three. Other practices related to hiring people with disabilities included accessible interview locations, active recruitment of people with disabilities, and an accessible application process.

## Discussion

Employer practices can contribute to job access, retention, and advancement for people with disabilities. This brief provides a current picture of the implementation of disability-inclusive practices by companies

**Measurable goals for hiring people with disabilities, partnerships with organizations, accessible interview locations, active recruitment of people with disabilities, and an accessible online application were related to hiring a person with a disability in the past 12 months.**

and describes which companies have them versus which companies do not. In general, companies were more likely to implement practices to retain and advance people with disabilities than to recruit and hire people with disabilities. One reason may be that companies are more willing to retain employees with temporary disabilities who have been with the company for some time than hire new employees with long-term disabilities (Hartnett et al., 2011). Small and goods-producing employers were least likely to implement most practices.

The results of this survey also indicate that, five years since changes to Section 503 went into effect, federal contractors were more likely to implement disability-inclusive recruitment and hiring policies and practices than other companies after controlling statistically for company characteristics. However, there were few differ-

ences between federal contractors and non-federal contractors in the implementation of disability-inclusive retention and advancement policies and practices. Federal contractors were more likely to implement only two of eight inclusive retention and advancement practices. This suggests that while federal contractors are responding to the regulatory changes, there is progress to be made.

There was a disconnect between the recruitment and hiring practices implemented by most companies and the practices related to hiring people with disabilities based on logistic regression analysis. Most companies implemented only one of the five practices related to hiring—accessible interview locations. Only 30 percent or fewer of companies implemented the other four practices related to hiring.

Our findings indicate that while some companies have adopted disability-inclusive practices, many are not implementing practices that have the potential to increase hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities. ODEP may wish to highlight these practices through its technical assistance centers. ODEP may wish to highlight the need for companies to go beyond non-discrimination or equal opportunity policy in job announcements and accessible interview locations to develop partnerships with organizations to broaden their talent base for recruitment.

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**Table A-1**

**Percentage of companies implementing recruitment and hiring practices, by company size, industry, and federal contractor status**

Policy or practice	Company size				Industry			Federal contractor	
	All	Sm.	Med.	Lg.	Goods Prod.	Service Prov.	Public Admin.	Yes	No
Job announcements display non-discrimination/equal opportunity policy	74.0	62.6	83.4	97.9	73.3	73.6	94.1	90.6	72.6
Application process is accessible	30.4	24.6	33.6	56.9	22.3	31.7	40.8	39.3	29.5
Interview accommodations	80.5	75.8	83.6	97.8	76.8	80.9	92.8	89.0	80.1
Interview locations that are accessible	91.6	89.8	93.2	94.2	87.8	92.1	99.9	98.4	91.1
Partnerships with organizations	16.8	12.6	18.6	40.4	17.6	16.6	17.9	33.8	15.5
Measureable goals for hiring people with disabilities	10.5	8.1	11.2	26.4	10.7	10.5	8.6	25.8	9.1
Dedicated recruiter	4.2	3.3	4.4	11.5	4.4	4.2	6.9	11.0	3.5
Actively recruits people with disabilities	17.5	10.7	21.7	43.7	14.7	17.7	30.0	38.2	15.7

N=2,023 companies

Source: 2018 Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities, Q25

**Table A-2**

**Percentage of companies implementing retention and advancement practices, by company size, industry, and federal contractor status**

Policy or practice	Company size				Industry			Federal contractor	
	All	Sm.	Med.	Lg.	Goods Prod.	Service Prov.	Public Admin.	Yes	No
Disability awareness or sensitivity training	51.7	45.3	56.4	71.6	40.7	53.5	67.0	60.2	51.0
A disability employee resource or affinity group	4.7	4.5	4.0	13.6	4.2	4.8	7.7	7.2	4.3
SAW/RTW programs or policies	73.3	66.7	78.3	91.5	75.9	72.6	81.3	77.9	73.1
Workplace flexibility programs	69.2	66.9	70.8	76.4	56.9	71.8	62.0	79.4	68.3
Job reassignments	59.6	48.3	68.7	86.3	61.0	59.2	62.7	80.3	58.1
Voluntary and confidential self-disclosure	82.9	78.4	86.6	93.3	81.5	83.1	86.8	86.5	82.7
Measurable goals for retaining/advancing people with disabilities	28.6	27.1	29.5	34.4	26.5	29.1	22.1	31.9	28.1
Task shifting	64.7	59.4	68.6	79.9	59.6	65.8	61.0	73.0	64.3

N=2,023 companies

Source: 2018 Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities, Q26