

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Research report 88

Barriers to employment and unfair treatment at work: a quantitative analysis of disabled people's experiences

Nick Coleman, Wendy Sykes,
and Carola Groom

Independent Social Research

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Nick Coleman
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Summary

Introduction

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) has instigated research into the barriers to work for disabled people and unfair treatment in the workplace. It contributes to two of the EHRC's strategic priorities: to tackle the structural causes of pay gaps between equality groups; and, to promote dignity and respect in the workplace.

The report paints a detailed, statistical picture of social and environmental factors in the workplace, including unfair treatment that can affect disabled people's chances of getting work, staying in work and making progress at work. It is based on quantitative findings produced by government and other reliable sources that have already been published or are available as tables on-line; and the results of secondary analysis of existing survey and other data carried out to add further detail, especially in terms of differences between groups of disabled people. Key findings are for Great Britain unless otherwise stated and are summarised under the main chapter headings of the report.

Analysis for the report shows that one in six people of working age living in the UK is disabled.¹ Although some are not able to do paid work because of the factors related to their impairment or the barriers experienced, for others the opportunity and right to work is of paramount importance. Yet, disabled people are relatively disadvantaged compared with non-disabled people when it comes to paid employment, a multi-faceted problem that is a cause for concern in most countries. The OECD describes working age disability policy as 'one of the biggest social and labour market challenges for policy makers' (OECD, 2010).

Addressing inequalities in this area requires a thorough and nuanced understanding of the scale and nature of the problem, and one that takes account of the huge diversity *within* the population of disabled people; the needs and preferences of different groups; and the different challenges they face both in and outside the workplace.

¹ Labour Force Survey, Q3 2012

Employment, unemployment and economic activity²

On all key employment measures examined in this study, disabled people of working age in Great Britain are at a disadvantage compared with non-disabled people. They are less likely to be in work (47 per cent compared with 77 per cent); less likely to be economically active (47 percent are economically inactive compared with 16 per cent of non-disabled people); and those who are economically active are more likely to be unemployed (12 per cent compared with eight per cent) and unemployed for longer (47 per cent of unemployed disabled people have been unemployed for a year or more, compared with 31 per cent of unemployed non-disabled people).

In terms of type of work, disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to work part-time (33 per cent compared with 25 per cent) and to do lower skilled jobs; around one third (31 per cent) are in semi-routine or routine occupations compared with only a quarter (25 per cent) of non-disabled people, and 34 per cent compared with 43 per cent are in managerial or professional roles. Consequently, earnings are lower among disabled people, with 30 per cent earning less than the 'Living Wage' (compared with 26 per cent of non-disabled people) and 49 per cent compared with 55 per cent earning more than £10 an hour.

The employment gap (the difference in percentage points between the proportion of disabled and non-disabled people in employment) is smaller for women, 16 to 24 year olds and those with higher qualifications.

The transition from full-time education to work is difficult for all young people, but more so for disabled people and especially disabled young men: the employment rate gap for young women aged 16 to 24 is much smaller than that for young men (11 percentage points compared with 27).

The percentage that is economically inactive does not differ much between disabled men and disabled women. However, between the ages of 25 and 54, disability is by far the main reason for economic inactivity among men - over one third of disabled men of this age are economically inactive, compared with just three per cent of non-disabled men.

People with mental health conditions and learning disabilities are considerably more disadvantaged than other impairment groups, in terms of employment rate, type of work and level of unemployment.

² All findings in this section are based on the working age population, defined as adults aged 16 to 64, in Great Britain. Findings are taken from the Labour Force Survey, Q3 2012.

Barriers to work³

Analysis of the Life Opportunities Survey (LOS) shows that one third of disabled people in work (36 per cent) and two-thirds of unemployed disabled people (66 per cent) say they are limited in the amount or type of work that they do or could do. As might be expected, health or disability is a frequently reported limitation in terms of work, but other factors are also important.

Disabled people were *more* likely than non-disabled people to select as a limitation (as defined by the LOS question): difficulty with transport (affecting a quarter of unemployed disabled people), the attitudes of employers or colleagues, anxiety or lack of confidence, and issues relating to access and support (e.g. difficulty getting into buildings, difficulty using facilities and lack of special aids or equipment).

There are differences by gender and age that apply to both disabled and non-disabled people. For women, family and caring responsibilities feature more prominently than for men, and young people aged 25 to 34 are more likely than other age groups to report lack of qualifications or experience, and the attitudes of employers.

Anxiety or lack of confidence affects a relatively high proportion of people with a learning impairment, memory impairment or mental health conditions compared to people with other impairment types.

Disabled people are most likely to mention modified hours or days or reduced work hours as something that has helped or could help them into work.

Unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying and harassment at work⁴

The most recent data on unfair treatment in the workplace comes from the Fair Treatment at Work Survey, carried out in 2008. Around one in four disabled people in Great Britain said they had experienced some form of unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work in the previous two years (27 per cent), compared with 17 per cent for non-disabled people.

Specifically, 19 per cent of disabled people said they had experienced unfair treatment, 12 per cent discrimination, two per cent sex-based harassment and 14 per cent other bullying or harassment.

³ All findings in this section are taken from the Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011, and are based on the working age population, defined as adults aged 16 to 64, in Great Britain.

⁴ All findings in this section are taken from the Fair Treatment at Work survey (2008), unless otherwise specified. Findings are based on people who had been in work in the previous two years.

Negative experiences at work with colleagues or clients that could constitute harassment or bullying were reported by more than half of disabled people (53 per cent) compared with less than two-fifths (38 per cent) of non-disabled respondents. More than a third of disabled people (37 per cent) said they had been treated in a disrespectful or rude way, 23 per cent that they had been insulted or had offensive remarks made about them and 14 per cent that they had been humiliated or ridiculed in connection with their work. Nine per cent had experienced actual physical violence at work.

In the 2010 Citizenship Survey, 15 per cent of disabled people in England and Wales who had looked for work in the previous five years said they had been discriminated against when they had been refused or turned down for a job. This is higher than the proportion for non-disabled people (seven per cent).

Nature of unfair treatment⁵

The main reasons given by disabled people for unfair treatment at work were the attitudes or personalities of other people (52 per cent) or relationships at work (43 per cent); 30 per cent said that the unfair treatment they had experienced was because of their disability or condition.

Overall, seven per cent of disabled people said that, in the previous two years, they had experienced unfair treatment or discrimination at work because of their disability, long-term illness or other health problem. According to the Life Opportunities Survey: six per cent of disabled people who were in work at the time of the survey said they had been treated unfairly by their employer or work colleagues in the preceding 12 months because of a health condition, illness or impairment or a disability.

Unfair treatment of and discrimination against disabled people at work took a variety of forms, most commonly: the type of work disabled people are given, being ignored, working hours, assessment of work performance or appraisal, and workload. The Life Opportunities Survey found that unfair treatment was often related to being given fewer responsibilities than people wanted.

An employer or manager (either with or without colleagues) was the person most likely to be named by disabled people as responsible for the unfair treatment at work:

⁵ All findings in this section are taken from the Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008, unless otherwise specified.

68 per cent from the Fair Treatment at Work Survey, and 78 per cent from the Life Opportunities Survey said this.

More than half of disabled people who had experienced a workplace problem said they tried to resolve the problem informally (58 per cent), while 72 per cent said they discussed the issue with their employer. In addition, 40 per cent said they had a formal meeting and 35 per cent put their concerns in writing. In four per cent of cases, disabled respondents made an application to an Employment Tribunal.

Disabled people were more likely than non-disabled people to have experienced a negative outcome from a workplace problem. Nearly half of disabled people said that the problems had affected their physical health and physical well-being (48 per cent) and their psychological health and well-being (47 per cent), while a third said their financial well-being (31 per cent) and their personal relationships (29 per cent) had been negatively affected.

Wider attitudes towards unfair treatment at work

Attitudes of the working population⁶

According to the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) 2006, the majority of the working population agreed that “the main problem faced by disabled people at work is other people’s prejudice, not their own lack of ability” (63 per cent). The majority also agreed that “attempts to give equal opportunities to people with a disability or a long-term illness in the workplace” had “not gone far enough” (57 per cent). These findings indicate that in 2006, many working people supported attempts to give disabled people equal opportunities, at least in principle.

In the same survey, 18 per cent said that their colleagues would mind a lot or a little “if a suitably qualified person with a disability or long-term illness were appointed as their boss”. Similarly, in a later wave of the BCS in 2009, one in five working people (22 per cent) agreed that “in general, people with disabilities cannot be as effective at work as people without disabilities”, and that most people at work would feel very or fairly comfortable “if somebody referred to disabled people in a negative way in front of their colleagues” (19 per cent).

⁶ All findings in this section are taken from the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA), unless otherwise specified.

Employer experiences and attitudes

In a 2009 survey of employers from 2,000 organisations with at least 3 employees, over half (61 per cent) said they had made an employment-related adjustment for a disabled employee in the past, or planned to do so. Flexible working time or working arrangements were the most commonly reported employment-related adjustments.

Concerns among employers in relation to employing disabled people included perceived risks to productivity; concerns over the implications (financial and otherwise) of making workplace adjustments; confusion over legislation and required practices, and negative perceptions of legislation.

Conclusions

Findings from the Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008 indicate that disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to report unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work. The findings from surveys of the wider working population and from employers appear to corroborate this pattern, with evidence of prejudice towards disabled people at work. This suggests that there may be a prevailing workplace culture that contributes to the unfair treatment or discrimination of disabled people.

The report has also examined employment patterns and barriers to work. This indicates that unfair treatment or discrimination at work is part of a larger pattern of disadvantage for disabled people. Specifically, disabled people are less likely than non-disabled people to be in employment, and are less likely to be economically active. Disabled people who are economically active are more likely to be unemployed and to be unemployed for longer. In addition, disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to do lower skilled jobs with lower earnings. Disabled people are also more likely than non-disabled people to report a number of barriers to work, such as difficulties with transport, the attitudes of employers or colleagues, anxiety or lack of confidence, and issues relating to access and support.

1. Introduction

1.1 Report aims and coverage

Disabled people in the UK are much less likely than non-disabled people to be in work. Around one in six adults of working age is disabled (5.4 million people) compared with only one in ten people at work (DWP, 2013).

This pattern is true also of many other countries; in the European Union only 40 per cent of disabled people are employed compared with 64 per cent of non-disabled people (European Commission, 2013). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) describes working age disability policy as “one of the biggest social and labour market challenges for policy makers” (OECD, 2010). The European Employment Strategy pays special attention to the needs of disabled people under integrated guidelines that seek to ensure inclusive labour markets, enhanced work attractiveness and work that pays.

In the United Kingdom the Equality Act (EA) that was introduced in October 2010, replacing the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)⁷ 1995, has created a legal framework for promoting the full integration and participation of disabled people in all aspects of life, including employment.

Good quality evidence is key to successful policy in this area and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which has a statutory remit to promote and monitor human rights and to protect, enforce and promote equality across the nine “protected” grounds covered by the EA⁸, has already built up a useful body of research evidence on access and barriers to work and unfair treatment in the workplace on the grounds of disability (for example, see Adams and Oldfield, 2011; Riddell et al., 2010).

The purpose of this report is to strengthen further the EHRC’s evidence base by bringing together relevant published statistical findings from UK survey and other data sources, as well as the results from bespoke secondary analysis of existing quantitative data. It covers the following broad, overlapping areas:

⁷ The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 introduced new laws and measures, which aimed to end the discrimination faced by many disabled people, including in relation to employment. It was significantly extended in 2005. As part of the protection offered by the Act, employers were prohibited from discriminating against disabled people for a reason related to their disability, and they had to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to their employment arrangements and/or premises so that disabled people were not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other people.

⁸ Other characteristics that are ‘protected’ under the terms of the Act include: age, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and sexual orientation.

- Employment, unemployment and economic activity;
- Barriers to work;
- Unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying and harassment in the workplace;
- Reasons for unfair treatment;
- Perpetrators/locus of responsibility;
- Impact of unfair treatment;
- Wider attitudes to unfair treatment in the workplace.

The outcome is a more detailed, *quantified* picture of social and environmental workplace factors, including unfair treatment, that can affect disabled people's chances of getting work, staying in work and making progress at work.⁹

The evidence presented within this report will support the Commission's work towards two of its strategic priorities: to tackle the structural causes of pay gaps between equality groups; and, to promote dignity and respect in the workplace.

1.2 Definitions and terms used in the report

The definition of disability adopted in the Equality Act 2010 is used throughout this report, unless otherwise stated. According to this definition a person has a disability if they have a 'physical or mental impairment' that has a 'substantial and long-term' negative effect on their ability to carry out 'normal day-to-day activities'; long-term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is expected to last for 12 months or more.¹⁰

The report also includes analysis by impairment type. The term 'impairment' covers any loss or abnormality of physiological, psychological, or anatomical structure or function, whether permanent or temporary. Examples include any loss of sight, hearing, mobility or learning capacity. Impairment can be present at birth or result from accident or disease and is different from having a medical or health condition; for instance arthritis is a health condition whereas loss of dexterity is an impairment that can be caused by arthritis.

The Equality Act itself, as a legislative tool, takes account of two main conceptual models of disability. The first of these is the medical model that focuses on

⁹ The term 'unfair treatment' is used in this report broadly to include workplace discrimination, victimisation, bullying and harassment.

¹⁰ 11.5 million people are covered by the disability provisions set out in the Equality Act – amounting to nearly one-fifth (19 per cent) of the population. See *Fulfilling potential: building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today*, Department for Work and Pensions, February 2013. Figures from the Family Resources Survey 2010/11.

impairment as the cause of disability preventing people from living a normal life; policy based on the medical model therefore leans towards for instance, health care solutions to cure conditions, alleviate symptoms and mitigate impairment.

The second conceptual model of disability is the social model that identifies *systemic barriers, negative attitudes and deliberate or inadvertent exclusion* as the key contributory factor in disabling people – affecting their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It recognises that individual functional limitation or impairment leads to disability mainly if society fails to take account of and include everyone regardless of their individual differences. Policy based on the social model therefore tries to address these societal failings.

1.3 Approach to the analysis in this report

This report includes statistics produced by government and other reliable sources that have already been published in reports or as tables available online.¹¹ It also includes the results of secondary analysis of existing survey and other data carried out where appropriate to augment and add detail to the quantitative evidence base.

The key surveys included in the secondary analysis are:

- Labour Force Survey, July-September 2012 (LFS);
- Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011;
- Fair Treatment at Work Survey, 2008;
- Citizenship Survey, 2010;
- British Social Attitudes Survey, 2006 and 2009.

Where secondary analysis has been carried out, the main (but not only) comparisons are between disabled and non-disabled people and – where possible - between people with different kinds of impairments. Intersectional analysis has also been carried out to explore the relationship between disability and other characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity and occupation.

Throughout the report, differences between groups of respondents are highlighted only if they are statistically significant.

¹¹ Collecting reliable statistics on disability can be problematic. Most well-known sources of survey data have their weaknesses and limitations, including the surveys drawn on in this report. However, their strengths are important: large random probability national samples, well-established carefully constructed questionnaires, and high quality processes used in fieldwork, data processing and analysis.

1.4 Notes on data used in the report

Data provided in this report are for Great Britain unless otherwise stated.

Comparisons were made between results for England, Scotland and Wales, where sample sizes were large enough, but there were no notable differences between the three countries.

Most surveys with data on disability categorise respondents as disabled or not disabled based on their responses to particular questions, rather than on the results of any 'objective' or external observation or assessment.

Definitions and measures of disability used by the surveys referred to in this report vary. For example, the Labour Force Survey collects information from participants in order to classify them according to the Equality Act definition (see above); the Life Opportunities Survey takes a social model approach, although the information it collects also allows individual respondents to be classified according to the Equality Act definition. Details of the underlying definition of disability and the survey questions used to collect relevant classification information are provided throughout this report wherever survey based disability statistics are cited.

Surveys such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Life Opportunities Survey (LOS) also include analysis by impairment type using definitions of impairment which, although similar to definitions of disability, do not always cover the same individuals. For example, according to the LOS definition, it is possible to have impairment but not to be disabled, if the impairment does not have a 'substantial and long-term' negative effect on their ability to carry out 'normal day-to-day activities'. It should also be noted that the way impairments are categorised varies considerably by survey. This can cause problems in relating survey data to the EA definition and in comparing the results of different surveys.

There are methodological limitations in the statistics we have used for this report, indeed in all social statistics. For example, the standardised approach to fieldwork that most surveys adopt prevents some people from taking part (although LOS makes efforts to be as inclusive and accessible as possible); respondents may not self-identify as having a physical or mental impairment with a substantial and long-term effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities; sample frames also exclude the non-household population, for instance, people living in residential care.

1.5 Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides important contextual information about the employment position of disabled versus non-disabled people, and also explores variations within the

disabled population of working age in terms of key variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, education and – importantly – impairment type.

Chapter 3 presents available statistical evidence about the limitations and barriers to work that many disabled people experience, and disabled people's views about what would help to overcome these.

Chapter 4 examines the prevalence of reported experience of: unfair treatment and discrimination at work; harassment, bullying, hostility and targeted violence at work; and unfair treatment when looking for work.

Chapter 5 focuses on the *nature* of unfair treatment in the workplace, including perceived reasons for unfair treatment and who was responsible. It also looks at the impact of unfair treatment on the people who experience it.

Chapter 6 moves away from the focus on the experiences and views of disabled people and considers wider attitudes among the working population, as well as the views of employers. It provides a picture of workplace practices and cultures, against which to examine disabled people's perceptions of unfair treatment.

The final short chapter attempts to draw together the key findings of the report and considers the implications for policy makers.

2. Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity

Key findings

- On all key employment measures examined, disabled people are at a disadvantage compared with non-disabled people.
- They are less likely to be economically active, and those who are economically active are more likely to be unemployed and unemployed for longer.
- Disabled people in work are more likely to work in part-time, lower skilled and lower paid jobs.
- The difference in percentage points between the proportion of disabled and non-disabled people in employment (the 'employment gap') is smaller for women, 16 to 24 year olds and those with higher qualifications.
- The transition from full-time education to work is difficult for all young people, but more so for young disabled people and especially young disabled men.
- The percentage that is economically inactive does not differ much between disabled men and disabled women. However, between the ages of 25 and 54, disability is given as the main reason for economic inactivity by most disabled men – over one third of disabled men of this age are economically inactive, compared with just three per cent of non-disabled men.
- People with mental health conditions and learning disabilities are considerably more disadvantaged than other impairment groups, in terms of employment rate, type of work and level of unemployment.

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter we examine the employment status of disabled people and the kinds of work they do, and describe the disadvantage they experience compared with non-disabled people. We also look at whether overall differences between disabled and non-disabled people are spread evenly or concentrated in particular groups defined in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, educational attainment and impairment type.

Most of the statistics presented in this chapter come from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) Q2 or Q3, 2012-13¹² and Wave One of the Life Opportunities Survey, 2009-11.¹³ They are based on the working age population, defined as adults aged 16 to 64, in Great Britain.

2.2 Overview of economic status

The Labour Force Survey groups people of working age into three main categories, which are used throughout this chapter:

1. The *employed* population is made up of people who were in work or self-employed in a four week reference period before the survey was carried out¹⁴
2. The *unemployed* population is made up of people who were jobless during the same four week reference period but actively seeking work¹⁵
3. *Economically inactive* people are those without a job, who did not actively seek work in the reference period and/or were not available to start work in the following two weeks.

In addition, some key findings in this chapter refer to the *economically active* population which is made up of both employed and unemployed people – that is to say all those who are currently working *or* who want work and are available and actively looking for it.

Disabled people are considerably less likely to be in employment than non-disabled people. This is shown by comparing the employment rate for these two groups, calculated as the percentage of the population of working age that is employed.

The employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people has narrowed substantially over the last 15 years. In 1998 only two-fifths (39 per cent) of disabled people were in work, and the employment gap was 40 percentage points. The

¹² References to the Labour Force Survey from the DWP (2013) report 'Fulfilling Potential' are based on Q2 2012; references from our own secondary analysis are based on Q3 2012: Office for National Statistics. Social Survey Division and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. Central Survey Unit, *Quarterly Labour Force Survey, July - September, 2012* [computer file]. *2nd Edition*. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], February 2013. SN: 7174, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-7174-2>

¹³ Office for National Statistics. Social Survey Division, *Life Opportunities Survey: Wave One, 2009-2011* [computer file]. *3rd Edition*. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], March 2012. SN: 6653, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6653-2>

¹⁴ Included are those who were temporarily absent during that period, people on government-supported training and employment programmes and anyone doing unpaid family work.

¹⁵ And were available *to start* work in the next two weeks (or had found a job, and were waiting to start it in the next two weeks).

current gap of 30 percentage points has remained stable over the last two years, in spite of the economic climate (DWP, 2013: 38-39). Nevertheless, paid work is much less likely to be a feature of disabled people's lives than of non-disabled people's lives.

Unemployment rate

The unemployment rate is calculated as the percentage of the population of working age that is unemployed. Table 2.1 shows that the unemployment rate for disabled people as a whole is very similar to that for non-disabled people (6 per cent compared with 7 per cent).

However, a possibly more interesting statistic is the percentage of the economically active population (those who are working, or who are actively looking for a job) that is unemployed. Table 2.2 shows that disabled economically active people are more likely to be unemployed, compared with non-disabled economically active people (12 per cent compared with 8 per cent).

Long term unemployment is also more common among disabled people. Nearly half of unemployed disabled people (47 per cent) have been out of work for a year or more, compared with less than a third of unemployed non-disabled people (31 per cent).¹⁶

Economic inactivity rate

Table 2.1 shows that the economic inactivity rate is much higher among disabled people than among non-disabled people (47 per cent compared with 16 per cent).

More detailed analysis of the economically inactive population shows that there are four main reasons that respondents give for economic inactivity: looking after the home or family; studying; being sick, injured or disabled; and other reasons (e.g. classifying oneself as retired).

For most (but not all) disabled people, the main reason for economic inactivity is being sick, injured or disabled (63 per cent). A significant minority give looking after the family or home (14 per cent), or other reasons. Non-disabled people are evenly divided between looking after the family or home (35 per cent), studying (32 per cent) or inactivity for other reasons (30 per cent). See Table 2.3 for details.

¹⁶ LFS Q3 2012

Table 2.1 Economic status of people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by disability, July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Inactive %	Unweighted bases
Non-disabled	77	7	16	49,197
Disabled	47**	6	47**	11,190
All	72	6	22	60,657

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Table 2.2 Employment status of economically active people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by disability, July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Unweighted bases
Non-disabled	92	8	40,952
Disabled	88**	12**	5,900
All	92	8	46,982

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Nearly one third of economically inactive disabled people say they would like a job compared with under a quarter of their non-disabled counterparts (29 per cent versus 22 per cent).¹⁷

Findings from the recent *Fulfilling potential* report suggest that some disabled people are economically inactive for long periods of time. Comparing two consecutive quarters of Labour Force Survey data, the report found that those who were economically inactive in one quarter generally remained in that category in the second quarter. Moreover, disabled people who moved out of either employment or unemployment were more likely to move into economic inactivity than into another category of economic activity (DWP, 2013: 47-48).

¹⁷ LFS Q3 2012

Table 2.3: Main reason for inactivity among people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain, by disability, July to September 2012

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All economically inactive %
Looking after family or home	35	14**	27
Student	32	4**	22
Sick, injured or disabled	2	63**	25
Other reason	30	19**	26
Unweighted bases (N)	8,245	5,290	13,535

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

2.3 Employment characteristics

This section focuses on the characteristics of disabled people's employment and on levels of pay. Unless otherwise stated, figures are based on people aged 16 to 64 who are in work.

Part-time employment

Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to work part-time (33 per cent compared with 25 per cent).¹⁸

Reasons for working part-time given by both disabled and non-disabled respondents to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) are very similar: the majority say that they do not *want* a full-time job (65 per cent in both groups); while around one in six say that they could not *find* a full-time job (17 per cent among disabled people and 19 per cent among non-disabled people).

However, the LFS also shows that 13 per cent of disabled people link their part-time work directly to their disability, while five per cent say it is because of studying; in the non-disabled sample, 16 per cent say that they work part-time because of studying.

¹⁸ LFS Q3 2012

Table 2.4: Sector and workplace size, people aged 16 to 64 in employment, Great Britain, July to September 2012

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All %
Private sector:			
Less than 24 employees	31	32	31
25-49 employees	10	8**	10
50-499 employees	24	22**	24
500+ employees	10	8**	9
Public sector:			
Less than 24 employees	4	5**	4
25-49 employees	4	5**	4
50-499 employees	10	11**	10
500+ employees	9	10	9
Unweighted bases	33,142	4,464	37,606

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Public or private sector

Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to work for public sector employers (30 per cent compared with 26 per cent). A trend towards employment of disabled people in the public sector has been apparent for the last 10 years. Since 2002, there has been a 30 per cent increase in the number of disabled people working in the public sector, compared with a 24 per cent increase in the private sector (DWP, 2013: 46).

Disabled people are also less likely than non-disabled people to work for *larger* private sector employers: 30 per cent of disabled people work for private sector employers with 50 or more employees, compared with 34 per cent of non-disabled people (see Table 2.4).

Industry and occupation

The profile of jobs by industry sector is similar for disabled and non-disabled people. The one notable difference is that disabled people are more likely to work in public administration, education and health (34 per cent compared with 29 per cent of non-

Table 2.5: Industry sector, people aged 16 to 64 in employment, Great Britain, July to September 2012

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All in employment %
Public administration, education & health	29	34**	30
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	19	18	19
Banking and finance	17	15**	17
Manufacturing	10	9	10
Transport and communication	9	8	9
Construction	8	7*	7
Energy and water	2	2	2
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1	1	1
Other services	5	5	5
Unweighted bases	37,708	5,179	43,003

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Table 2.6: Occupation, people aged 16 to 64 in employment, Great Britain, July to September 2012

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All in employment %
Higher managerial and professional	15	9**	15
Lower managerial and professional	28	25**	27
Intermediate occupations	14	14	14
Small employers and own account workers	9	10**	10
Lower supervisory and technical	8	9*	8
Semi-routine occupations	14	18**	15
Routine occupations	11	13**	11
Unweighted bases	41,486	7,647	49,277

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

disabled people); see Table 2.5. As this category covers many public sector jobs, these proportions are consistent with the findings described in the section above.

Table 2.6 shows that disabled people are less likely than non-disabled people to work in professional or managerial roles (34 per cent compared with 43 per cent), and are more likely to be doing semi-routine or routine jobs (31 per cent compared with 25 per cent).

Pay

With a higher percentage of disabled people employed in part-time and lower skilled work, it is not surprising to find that disabled people tend to earn less than non-disabled people. In fact, just under a third of disabled people in work (30 per cent) earn less than the living wage, compared with a quarter (26 per cent) of their non-disabled counterparts.¹⁹ Less than half (49 per cent) earn more than £10 an hour for the work they do, compared with 55 per cent of non-disabled people (see Table 2.7).

Table 2.7: Hourly pay, people aged 16 to 64 in employment, Great Britain, July to September 2012

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All in employment %
National minimum wage or below	14	15	14
More than national minimum wage but below living wage	12	15**	13
<i>All below living wage</i>	26	30**	27
Living wage or above, up to £10	19	21	19
More than £10, up to £20	39	37	38
More than £20	16	12**	16
<i>All more than £10</i>	55	49**	54
Unweighted bases	9,009	1,224	10,257

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

¹⁹ The Living Wage is calculated according to the basic cost of living in the UK and is currently £8.55 in London and £7.45 outside London. The National Minimum Wage is the minimum pay per hour most workers are entitled to by law, irrespective of employer size.

2.4 Differences by impairment and other characteristics

In this section we look at the extent to which differences between disabled and non-disabled people already described in this chapter are concentrated in particular sections of the population, rather than spread evenly. For example, is the 30 percentage point employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people consistent for both men and women, and across age groups, or is it bigger or smaller for some groups?

Focusing on key employment measures, we examine the interaction between disability and four socio-demographic variables: age, gender, ethnicity and educational attainment. We also look at differences between disabled people by type of impairment.

Age

Employment rates among disabled people are lowest in the youngest and oldest age groups (35 per cent of those aged 16-24 and are employed and 38 per cent of those

Table 2.8: Economic status of disabled people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by age, July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %	Employment gap (percentage points) ²⁰	Unweighted bases
16-24	35	16	48	-19	754
25-34	50**	10**	40**	-32	1,187
35-44	54**	7**	38**	-33	2,002
45-54	55**	5**	40**	-34	3,076
55-64	38	3**	59**	-31	4,171
All	47	6	47	-30	11,190

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level. Significance testing is not included for the employment gap.

²⁰ The employment gap is calculated as the difference (in percentage points between disabled and non-disabled people in each age band). For example, the overall figure of -30 indicates that the proportion of disabled people in employment is 30 percentage points lower than the proportion of non-disabled people in employment.

aged 55-64).²¹ In other age groups, employment rates for disabled people range from 50 to 55 per cent (see Table 2.8). This broad pattern is consistent with employment rates among non-disabled people, so the employment rate gap is also fairly consistent across most age bands: between 31 and 34 percentage points for bands between the ages of 25 and 64 (see Table 2.8).

However, for people aged 16 to 24, the employment gap is considerably smaller (19 percentage points). The dramatic widening of the employment rate gap after age 24 suggests that non-disabled people are more successful in making the transition from full-time education to work than disabled people (DWP, 2013: Table 40.3).²²

Looking at trends over time, there has been upward movement in the employment rate for both disabled and non-disabled people aged 25 and over since 2001, although this has levelled off since 2008 with the economic downturn in the UK (DWP, 2013: Technical Appendix, Table 40.1).

There has also been a marked decline in the employment rate for people aged 16-24, of similar magnitude for both disabled and non-disabled people. The main increase in youth unemployment started in 2004, so although the downward trend has been exacerbated by recent economic conditions it cannot be directly attributed to this cause (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2011).

The *type of work* done by younger people is similar for disabled and non-disabled people; in both groups people aged 16 to 24 tend to do less skilled, lower paid work and to work part-time. Around one fifth (19 per cent) of both disabled and non-disabled people in this age group are in unskilled 'routine' jobs.

However, a difference between disabled and non-disabled people is evident in older age groups where the proportion of non-disabled people doing unskilled, 'routine' jobs is only nine or 10 per cent, compared with 12 to 15 per cent of disabled people. Older, non-disabled people are also more likely to be in more senior jobs, possibly linked to career progression, but this pattern is less pronounced for disabled people.

Gender

Analysis by gender shows that disabled women are less likely than disabled men to be in employment (45 per cent compared with 49 per cent), and are more likely to be economically inactive (50 per cent compared with 43 per cent). This mirrors the

²¹ Correspondingly, levels of economic inactivity are highest among disabled people aged 55 to 64 (59 per cent) and younger people aged 16 to 24 (48 per cent).

²² The DWP report *Fulfilling Potential* identifies it more precisely as age 23 (DWP, 2013).

Table 2.9: Economic status of disabled people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by gender, July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %	Employment gap (percentage points)	Unweighted bases
Men	49	8	43	-33	4,845
Women	45**	5**	50**	-26	6,345
All	47	6	47	-30	11,190

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level. Significance testing is not included for the employment gap.

pattern of differences between non-disabled women and men but is less marked; 71 per cent of non-disabled women are in employment compared with 82 per cent of non-disabled men. Consequently, the employment rate gap for women is smaller than that for men (26 percentage points compared with 33 percentage points); see Table 2.9.

More detailed intersectional analysis looking at gender *and* age (see Table 2.10) shows that the employment rate gap for young women aged 16 to 24 is much smaller than that for young men of the same age (12 percentage points compared with 27). This suggests that the difficulties associated with the transition from full-time education to work (as described Section 2.4.1) may be more pronounced for young disabled men than for young disabled women.

In addition, the percentage that is economically inactive does not differ much between disabled men and disabled women. However, the difference between disabled men and non-disabled men in the main working age bands (25 to 54) is much more marked. Non-disabled men aged 25 to 54 are very *unlikely* to be economically inactive (just three per cent) but over one third of disabled men are economically inactive (35 per cent).

In terms of working hours, disabled women are much more likely to work part-time than disabled men (48 per cent compared with 18 per cent) but figures are very similar for non-disabled people; 42 per cent of non-disabled women work part-time compared with 11 per cent of non-disabled men (see Table 2.11).

Table 2.10: Economic status of disabled people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by gender and age, July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %	Employment gap (percentage points)	Unweighted bases
Men, 16-24	29	17	54	-27	350
Men, 25-34	52**	11*	37**	-37	456
Men, 35-44	59**	9**	32**	-35	819
Men, 45-54	56**	7**	37**	-36	1,318
Men, 55-64	43**	4**	52	-34	1,902
Women, 16-24	42**	15	43**	-11	404
Women, 25-34	49**	9**	43**	-25	731
Women, 35-44	51**	6**	42**	-28	1,183
Women, 45-54	54**	4**	42**	-32	1,758
Women, 55-64	33	1**	65**	-27	2,269
All	47	6	47	-30	11,190

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level. Significance testing is not included for the employment gap.

Table 2.11: Full or part-time work, people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain, by disability and gender, July to September 2012

	Full-time %	Part-time %	Unweighted bases
Non-disabled men	89	11	19,641
Non-disabled women	58**	42**	18,260
Disabled men	82**	18**	2,399
Disabled women	52**	48**	2,833
All	74	26	43,248

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Ethnicity

Analysis by ethnic group shows that Pakistani or Bangladeshi disabled people and those in the Mixed ethnicity group are much less likely to be in employment than White disabled people (Table 2.12). Pakistani or Bangladeshi disabled people are also much more likely to be economically inactive than their White counterparts (61 per cent compared with 46 per cent).

The same table also shows how differences in the employment rate between disabled people and non-disabled people vary by ethnic group. The smallest employment gaps are found among people from Chinese/Other, Black/Black British and Indian ethnic groups. Differences between disabled and non-disabled people are most marked within the White and Mixed ethnicity groups (32 and 33 percentage points respectively).

More detailed analysis of survey data by ethnicity (e.g. in terms of type of work) is not possible due to small numbers of disabled respondents in the various ethnic groups.

Table 2.12: Economic status of disabled people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by ethnicity, July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %	Employment gap (percentage points)	Unweighted bases
White	47	6	46	-32	10,131
Mixed	33*	13*	53	-33	84
Indian	49	5	46	-24	198
Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	29**	9*	61**	-26	272
Black/ Black British	42	8	49	-24	228
Chinese/ Other	43	9	48	-19	270
All	47	6	47	-30	11,190

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level. Significance testing is not included for the employment gap

Table 2.13: Economic status of disabled people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by qualification level,²³ July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %	Employment gap (percentage points)	Unweighted bases
NQF Level 4 and above	66	5	29	-19	2,640
NQF Level 3	61*	6	32*	-16	1,523
Trade Apprenticeships	49*	6	46*	-36	545
NQF Level 2	51*	9*	40*	-22	1,743
Below NQF Level 2	38*	7*	54*	-32	1,634
Other Qualifications	41*	6	53*	-34	816
No Qualifications	18*	6	76*	-35	2271
All	47	6	47	-30	11,190

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level. Significance testing is not included for the employment gap.

²³ NQF Level 4 and above: Degree level and above (or equivalent); NQF Level 3: A-levels, NVQ3 (or equivalent); NQF Level 2: GCSE Grades A* - C, NVQ2 (or equivalent).

Qualification level

The employment rate among disabled people differs substantially by level of educational qualification. Two thirds (66 per cent) of disabled people with a degree or equivalent qualification are in employment, compared with just 18 per cent of those with no formal qualifications.

The employment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled people is narrowest for those qualified to NQF Level 3 (A-level or equivalent) or Level 4 (degree level or equivalent), suggesting that disabled people with high level qualifications are at less of a disadvantage in employment terms than those with lower qualifications (see Table 2.13).

Both disabled and non-disabled people with lower level qualifications tend to do less skilled, lower paid work. However, the proportion of disabled people without any qualifications working part-time is much higher than the proportion of non-disabled people (49 per cent compared with 32 per cent).

Disabled people tend to have lower level qualifications than non-disabled people; for example, the proportion qualified to Level 4 or above is lower (24 per cent compared with 37 per cent) and the proportion with no qualifications is higher (20 per cent compared with seven per cent). There is a direct statistical relationship between employment rate and educational attainment, so the lower overall employment rates for disabled people compared with non-disabled people can be linked to differences in qualification level.

Other possibly compounding factors include the fact that the number of unskilled jobs – in which many disabled people with low or no qualifications are employed – has shrunk markedly as a share of available jobs since the early 1970s. According to a recent EHRC report, the position of disabled people with no qualifications worsened considerably between 1974 and 2003; and the employment rate for disabled men with no qualifications halved over this period (Riddell et al., 2010).

Figures from the Life Opportunities Survey show that lower levels of qualification are most pronounced among people with impairments acquired at an early age (DWP, 2013: Table 16). Related to this, pupils with special educational needs achieve far fewer qualifications than those without and are likely to face a particular disadvantage in finding employment.²⁴

²⁴ **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** Office for Disability Issues website, Disability Equality Indicators, Indicator A5 - Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C.

Table 2.14: Economic status of people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by main health problem or disability, July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %	Unweighted bases
Arms or hands	59	5	36	1,117
Legs or feet	59	6	35	2,279
Back or neck	62	5	33	2,640
Difficulty in seeing	59	6	35	314
Difficulty in hearing	64	11**	25**	398
Speech impediment	-	-	-	[13]
Skin conditions, allergies	71**	8*	21**	546
Chest, breathing problems	69**	7*	24**	2,678
Heart, blood pressure, circulation	69**	5	26**	2,985
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	69**	6	25**	1,375
Diabetes	70**	5	25**	1,298
Depression, bad nerves	42**	12**	45**	1,297
Epilepsy	52*	8	40	284
Learning difficulties	35**	13**	52**	418
Mental illness, phobia, panics	21**	9**	70**	686
Progressive illness	45**	3*	52**	815
Other	65**	6	28**	2,461
All	61	7	32	21,604

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

This table is based on all respondents with a long-term health problem or disability, the group from which individual impairment types are classified. This is a larger group than earlier LFS tables, which are based on all 'disabled' people (equivalent to the EA definition). As a result, the 'total' figures for this table differ from earlier tables.

There is evidence that disabled people have difficulties gaining skills and qualifications after leaving full-time education. For example, Riddell et al. (2010) also found evidence that disabled people's participation in skills projects is often disproportionately low. In a separate qualitative study based on ten focus groups and ten in-depth interviews with disabled people, Adams and Oldfield (2011) found that having time off or being able only to work part-time because of impairments were key barriers to skills accreditation and opportunities to update skills through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (Adams and Oldfield, 2011).

Type of impairment

In this last section, we look at employment patterns by different types of impairment, starting with data from the Labour Force Survey before moving on to consider results from the Life Opportunities Survey.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) asks respondents who say they have a long-term health problem or disability to state which of 17 types of health problem or disability apply to them. If they report more than one, they are then asked to specify their main health problem or disability.

As Table 2.14 shows, employment rates vary considerably by main health problem or disability.²⁵ The highest employment rates are found among people with skin conditions or allergies (71 per cent); diabetes (70 per cent); chest or breathing problems (69 per cent); problems with heart, blood pressure or circulation (69 per cent); stomach, and liver, kidney or digestion problems (69 per cent).

Lower employment rates on the other hand are particularly evident for people with mental illness, phobia or panics (21 per cent); learning difficulties (35 per cent); depression or bad nerves (42 per cent); and progressive illnesses (45 per cent).

People with these latter impairments are also more likely to work part-time when they are in work: 51 per cent for those with learning difficulties; 41 per cent for those with mental illness, phobia or panics; 38 per cent for those with depression or bad nerves; and 36 per cent for those with progressive illness.

In addition, analysis by type of work shows that people with learning difficulties and those with mental illness, phobia or panics are more likely than those with other types

²⁵ Note that in the LFS the group of respondents with a long-term health problem or disability is larger than the group of respondents who are disabled according to the EA definition. This is because respondents can have a long-term health problem or disability that does not limit their daily activities.

of health conditions or disabilities to do unskilled, 'routine' jobs (23 per cent and 21 per cent respectively).

Table 2.15: Economic status of economically active people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain by main health problem or disability, July to September 2012

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Unweighted bases
Arms or hands	92	8	707
Legs or feet	91	9	1,459
Back or neck	92	8	1,753
Difficulty in seeing	90	10	204
Difficulty in hearing	85**	15**	296
Speech impediment	-	-	[11]
Skin conditions, allergies	90	10	427
Chest, breathing problems	90	10	2,021
Heart, blood pressure, circulation	93	7	2,180
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	92	8	1,029
Diabetes	93	7	951
Depression, bad nerves	77**	23**	703
Epilepsy	87*	13*	171
Learning difficulties	73**	27**	200
Mental illness, phobia, panics	70**	30**	197
Progressive illness	94	6	381
Other	91	9	1,750
All	90	10	14,440

Source: Labour Force Survey Q3 2012.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

This table is based on all respondents with a long-term health problem or disability, the group from which individual impairment types are classified. This is a larger group than earlier LFS tables, which are based on all 'disabled' people (equivalent to the EA definition). As a result, the 'total' figures for this table differ from earlier tables.

Table 2.16: Economic status of people with an impairment aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain, by impairment type, 2009-2011

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %	Unweighted bases
Long-term pain	53	7**	40*	4,194
Hearing	49	8	43	430
Sight	45**	8	47**	551
Chronic health conditions	40**	7**	53**	2,751
Learning	37**	15**	48**	614
Dexterity	28**	7*	65**	1,100
Breathing	26**	8	67**	524
Mental health conditions	26**	12**	61**	1,209
Mobility	24**	7**	70**	1,442
Memory	21**	10	68**	680
Speaking	18**	8	74**	240
Behavioural	15**	18**	67**	292
Intellectual	12**	14	74**	148
Other	32**	11	57**	240
Any impairment type	53	9	39	6,663

Source: Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011.

Notes: Because respondents can have more than one impairment type (i.e. the categories are not mutually exclusive), it is not possible to have a single reference group. Instead, for each impairment type, a comparison has been made between those with the specific impairment and all other respondents with an impairment. Significance testing is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Unweighted bases sum to more than the total number of disabled people because some people report more than one impairment.

Unemployment rates also vary by impairment type. This can be seen most clearly if we focus only on disabled people who are in work or actively looking for work, that is to say the population of *economically active* disabled people (see Table 2.15). Nearly one third (30 per cent) of those with mental illness, phobia and panics, more than a quarter (27 per cent) of those with learning difficulties and nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of those with depression or bad nerves are unemployed.

The Life Opportunities Survey (LOS) offers another means of examining the relationship between employment measures and type of impairment. In this survey, a respondent is defined as having an impairment if they say that they experience moderate, severe or complete difficulty within at least one area of physical or mental functioning; and that certain activities are limited as a result.²⁶

Respondents with multiple impairments are represented in more than one impairment category, making it more difficult to interpret differences between impairment types; however some broad patterns are evident, and these tend to confirm the LFS figures, despite the different categorisation system.

Employment rates are highest among people with long-term pain (53 per cent), hearing (49 per cent) and sight impairment (45 per cent). They are lowest among people with the following types of impairment: intellectual (12 per cent), behavioural (15 per cent), speech (18 per cent), memory (21 per cent), mobility (24 per cent), mental health (26 per cent) and breathing (26 per cent); see Table 2.16.

This chapter has shown clearly the employment disadvantage associated with disability. It also shows that this disadvantage is greater for some groups of disabled people than for others. The next chapter explores the limitations of and barriers to employment for disabled people.

²⁶ 'Activities' refer to different areas of physical or mental functioning, such as walking, climbing stairs or reading a newspaper.

3. Limitations and barriers to work for disabled people

Key findings

- Around a third of disabled people in work (36 per cent) reporting to the Life Opportunities Survey said that they are limited in the amount or type of work that they do, and two-thirds of unemployed disabled people said they are limited in the amount or type of work that they could do (66 per cent).
- When asked to choose from a list of factors, most disabled people said they are limited by a health condition, illness, impairment or disability. They also reported a range of other barriers which may or may not be linked, for example family responsibilities, lack of job opportunities, lack of qualifications or experience, the attitudes of employers and anxiety or lack of confidence.
- Around a quarter of unemployed disabled people said that they are limited in the work they could do due to difficulty with transport.
- There are differences by gender and age that apply to both disabled and non-disabled people. For women, caring responsibilities are a major factor limiting their ability to work; while people aged 25 to 34 are more likely than other age groups to report lack of qualifications or experience and the attitudes of employers.
- Anxiety or lack of confidence limit a relatively high proportion of people with a learning impairment, memory impairment or mental health conditions in the amount or type of work that they do.
- Disabled people are most likely to mention modified hours or days or reduced work hours as something that has helped or could help them in work.
- The findings indicate that a job coach can be important for young disabled people (aged 16 to 24) and those with communication and intellectual impairments.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter uses findings from the Life Opportunities Survey (LOS) to look at the kinds of limitations and barriers to work that are reported by disabled people. The survey collects information from both disabled and non-disabled people and therefore allows some comparisons to be made between the two groups. All of the findings in

this chapter are from LOS, Wave One, 2009-11 and are based on the working age population, defined as adults aged 16 to 64.²⁷

3.2 Are disabled people limited in the work they can do?

The Life Opportunities Survey asks respondents who are economically active, that is either in employment or unemployed, if they are limited in the type or amount of work that they do - or could do.²⁸

More than a third of disabled people in employment (36 per cent) say that they are limited in the amount or type of work that they do compared with less than a fifth (19 per cent) of non-disabled people. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of unemployed disabled people, a clear majority, say that they are limited in the amount or type of work that

Table 3.1: Whether limited in type or amount of work, people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain, 2009-2011

	Limited %	Unweighted bases
People in employment:		
Non-disabled	19	14,527
Disabled	36**	2,453
All	21	16,984
People unemployed and looking for work:		
Non-disabled	31	1,149
Disabled	66**	341
All	38	1,491

Source: Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

²⁷ Office for National Statistics. Social Survey Division, *Life Opportunities Survey: Wave One, 2009-2011* [computer file]. 3rd Edition. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], March 2012. SN: 6653, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6653-2>

²⁸ Question wording: [if in employment] "Are you limited in the type or amount of paid work that you do, for example, what you can do, how long you can work for, when you can work or where you can work?" [if unemployed and looking for work] "Are you limited in the type or amount of paid work that you could do, for example, what you could do, how long you could work for, when you could work or where you could work?"

they *could* do compared with 31 per cent of unemployed non-disabled people (see Table 3.1).

3.3 Type of limitations

We now look at the types of limitations that disabled people say affect the work they do, or could do, first focusing only on disabled people, and secondly highlighting the many important similarities and differences between disabled and non-disabled people. LOS respondents are asked why they are limited in the amount or type of paid work they can do (if employed), could do (if unemployed) or why they are not looking for paid work (if economically inactive).²⁹ They are presented with a list of pre-coded response options from which they can select as many as apply to them.

Analysis of disabled people

Table 3.2 shows the limitations mentioned by disabled respondents in each of the three main employment status categories: employed, unemployed and seeking work, and economically inactive (not seeking work).

In all three groups, the majority of respondents mention their health condition, illness or impairment, or a disability as a limiting factor (see figures in italics towards the bottom of Table 3.2). These are mentioned by 87 per cent of economically inactive disabled people as a barrier to them seeking work; by 65 per cent of unemployed disabled people as a factor affecting the kind of work they *could* do; and by 53 per cent of disabled people in employment as a factor affecting the kind of work they actually do.

Family responsibilities also feature prominently for all three groups, mentioned by 24 per cent of disabled people in employment, 20 per cent of those who are unemployed and 17 per cent of people who are economically inactive.

As might be expected, disabled people who are unemployed are more likely than the other two groups to mention lack of job opportunities (40 per cent) and lack of qualifications, experience and skills (25 per cent) as barriers to looking for and finding work. However, these issues are also seen as limiting for some disabled people who are in employment (e.g. lack of job opportunities is mentioned by 15 per cent of people in work), suggesting that although these respondents are in work, they may not always be doing the type of job they would prefer.

²⁹ Question wording: [if in employment] “Why are you limited in the type or amount of paid work that you do?” [if unemployed and looking for work] “Why are you limited in the type or amount of paid work that you could do?” [if economically inactive] “There are lots of reasons why people do not do paid work or choose not to look for work. May I just check, why are you not looking for paid work at the moment?”

Table 3.2: Limitations in type or amount of work, disabled people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain, 2009-2011

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %
A health condition, illness or impairment	46	57**	75**
A disability	17	24*	44**
Family responsibilities	24	20	17**
Lack of job opportunities	15	40**	7**
Lack of qualifications/experience/skills	14	25**	8**
Attitudes of employers	12	16	7**
Difficulty with transport	10	26**	12
Caring responsibilities	9	9	9
Anxiety/lack of confidence	9	14*	19**
Affects receipt of benefits	5	9*	7*
Lack of help or assistance	4	7	5
Attitudes of colleagues	3	3	3
Difficulty getting into buildings	2	3	5**
Difficulty using facilities	2	2	5**
Lack of special aids or equipment	2	4	2
Other	22	12**	6**
<i>Health condition, illness or impairment / disability combined</i>	53	65**	87**
<i>Attitudes of employers/colleagues combined</i>	13	17	8**
Unweighted bases	878	231	1,720

Source: Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

The findings for those in employment and those who are unemployed are based on respondents who said that they were limited in some way (as described above). However, the findings for economically inactive disabled people are based on *all respondents* in that category.

Table 3.3: Limitations in type or amount of work, people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain, 2009-2011

	Employed		Unemployed		Economically inactive	
	Not disabled %	Disabled %	Not disabled %	Disabled %	Not disabled %	Disabled %
A health condition, illness or impairment	3	46**	5	57**	8	75**
A disability	*	17**	2	24**	2	44**
Family responsibilities	44	24**	42	20**	70	17**
Lack of job opportunities	17	15	42	40	10	7**
Lack of qualifications/ experience/skills	12	14	25	25	7	8
Attitudes of employers	8	12**	10	16	1	7**
Difficulty with transport	6	10**	27	26	3	12**
Caring responsibilities	7	9*	8	9	13	9**
Anxiety/lack of confidence	2	9**	8	14*	4	19**
Affects receipt of benefits	3	5	8	9	3	7**
Lack of help or assistance	3	4	6	7	2	5**
Attitudes of colleagues	1	3**	2	3	*	3**
Difficulty getting into buildings	*	2**	0	3**	*	5**
Difficulty using facilities	*	2**	1	2	*	5**
Lack of special aids or equipment	*	2**	*	4**	*	2**
Other	38	22**	28	12**	17	6**
<i>Health condition, illness or impairment / disability combined</i>	3	53**	7	65**	9	87**
<i>Attitudes of employers/ colleagues combined</i>	9	13**	10	17*	1	8**
Unweighted bases	2,780	878	355	231	1,638	1,720

Source: Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Similarly, limitations relating to access to work are most likely to be mentioned by unemployed respondents; for example, 26 per cent say that difficulty with transport is a limitation, while lack of help and assistance are mentioned by seven per cent and lack of special aids and equipment by four per cent. Again, however, these issues are listed by some people in employment, as well as those who are economically inactive.

Respondents in all three groups say that the attitudes of employers or work colleagues are a limitation. This is highest among disabled people who are unemployed (17 per cent), and lowest among economically inactive respondents (eight per cent); figures for this category, which combines the two individual responses 'attitudes of employers' and 'attitudes of colleagues', are shown at the bottom of Table 3.2. This issue is explored further in the next chapter on unfair treatment at work.

One in five disabled respondents who are economically inactive say that anxiety or lack of confidence is a limitation (19 per cent), a higher proportion than for the other groups. This finding supports previous DWP research. In a survey of 3,650 disabled people claiming Employment and Support Allowance conducted in 2010, lack of confidence was one of the most common barriers to work (Barnes et al. 2010).

This analysis confirms that disabled people experience a range of barriers and limitations in relation to finding suitable employment opportunities, and that individual disabled people often face multiple barriers.

Comparison of disabled and non-disabled people

When comparing the barriers and limitations to work mentioned by disabled and non-disabled people (Table 3.3), the main difference lies in the high proportion of disabled people who mention a health condition, illness or impairment, or a disability, as would be expected. The proportion mentioning this ranges from 53 per cent to 87 per cent among disabled people and between three per cent and nine per cent among non-disabled people, across the three activity status groups. The other main difference is in the proportion of people who say they are limited by family responsibilities. Around one in five disabled people say they are limited by looking after the family or home (between 17 per cent and 24 per cent across the three activity status groups), but this reason is given by a much higher proportion of non-disabled people, especially those who are economically inactive (70 per cent).

Other limitations that disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to mention include:

- Difficulty with transport, with the largest difference among economically inactive people (12 per cent compared with three per cent of non-disabled people); however, the figures are similar for unemployed disabled and non-disabled people;
- Attitudes of employers or colleagues, higher for disabled people in all three groups.
- Anxiety or lack of confidence, again higher for disabled people in all three groups, with the largest difference among economically inactive people (19 per cent compared with four per cent of non-disabled people).
- Issues relating to access and support, e.g. difficulty getting into buildings, difficulty using facilities and lack of special aids or equipment.

The proportions who say they are limited by caring responsibilities (such as looking after an older person or someone else with a disability) are similar for disabled and non-disabled people, and figures are also similar for a number of other response categories, such as lack of job opportunities and lack of qualifications, experience or skills. It may be surprising that figures are similar on lacking qualifications and skills, given the lower levels of qualification seen for disabled people (as described in the previous chapter).

Variations by gender and age

Intersectional analysis of limitations by gender and disability shows that disabled women are more likely than disabled men to say they are limited by family responsibilities. This applies both to disabled people in work (32 per cent compared with 12 per cent) and those who are economically inactive (27 per cent compared with five per cent).³⁰ Disabled women are also more likely than disabled men to mention caring responsibilities (12 per cent compared with six per cent among those in work; 11 per cent compared with six per cent for those who are economically inactive). By contrast, men are more likely than women to say that their health condition or disability is the main limitation they face (94 per cent compared with 81 per cent among those who are economically inactive).

Analysis by disability and age shows that disabled people aged 25 to 34 who are economically inactive are more likely than those in other age groups to say they are limited by a lack of qualifications, skills or experience (15 per cent compared with

³⁰ It is not possible to examine sub-group differences for disabled people who are unemployed and seeking work, as base sizes are too small. It is also not possible to carry out reliable analysis by ethnicity or qualification level, again because of small base sizes.

seven per cent in the rest of the sample).³¹ Disabled people aged 25 to 34 are also more likely than other age groups to say they are limited by the attitudes of employers (14 per cent compared with seven per cent). In the previous chapter, it was noted that age 23 appears to be an important point at which the employment gap widens between disabled and non-disabled people (DWP, 2013).

Table 3.4: Whether limited in type or amount of work, people with impairments in work aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain, 2009-2011

	Limited %	Unweighted bases
Sight	35	235
Hearing	35	208
Speaking	54**	39
Mobility	58**	354
Dexterity	50**	307
Long-term pain	33	2,101
Breathing	42*	136
Learning	38	197
Intellectual	-	[12]
Behavioural	62**	36
Memory	46**	140
Mental health condition	50**	307
Chronic health conditions	42**	1,027
Other	50**	81
Any with impairment	33	3,286

Source: Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011.

Notes: Because respondents can have more than one impairment type (i.e. the categories are not mutually exclusive), it is not possible to have a single reference group. Instead, for each impairment type, a comparison has been made between those with the specific impairment and all other respondents with an impairment. Significance testing is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Unweighted bases sum to more than the total number of disabled people because some people report more than one impairment.

³¹ It is not possible to examine sub-group differences for disabled people who are unemployed and seeking work, as base sizes are too small.

Variations by impairment type

Looking at differences in limitations by impairment type shows that disabled people who are in employment are most likely to say they are limited in some way if they have one of the following impairments: behavioural impairment (62 per cent);³² mobility impairment (58 per cent); speaking impairment (54 per cent);³³ dexterity impairment (50 per cent); and mental health conditions (50 per cent); see Table 3.4.

It is not possible to analyse differences by impairment type on this issue for unemployed respondents as the number of respondents is too small, and economically inactive respondents were not asked this question.

The types of limitations reported by disabled people in employment vary with different kinds of impairment. Anxiety or lack of confidence is strongly associated with mental health conditions (29 per cent), memory impairment (25 per cent) and learning impairment (22 per cent). People with memory impairment are also more likely than other respondents to say they are limited by the attitudes of employers (28 per cent).

Again, it is not possible to analyse differences by impairment type for those who are unemployed. However, detailed analysis of the factors limiting the ability to *look for* work is possible for economically inactive disabled people (see footnote 28), and the following findings are important:

- People with vision impairment are more likely than people in other impairment groups to mention physical barriers such as difficulty with transport, difficulty getting into buildings, difficulty using facilities, and lack of special aids or equipment;
- People with hearing and communication impairments are more likely than other respondents to mention lack of special aids or equipment, lack of help or assistance, and attitudes of colleagues;
- People with learning impairment are more likely than other respondents to mention anxiety or lack of confidence, difficulty with transport and the attitudes of employers;
- People with behavioural impairments are more likely than other respondents to mention anxiety or lack of confidence, attitudes of colleagues, attitudes of employers, and possible effect on receipt of benefits;
- People with memory impairment and those with mental health conditions are more likely than other respondents to mention anxiety or lack of confidence.

³² Findings for this group should be treated with caution as base size is less than 50

³³ Findings for this group should be treated with caution as base size is less than 50

The findings from the Life Opportunities Survey indicate that anxiety or lack of confidence is a barrier to work for a relatively high proportion of people with a learning impairment, memory impairment or mental health conditions who are in work or economically inactive. Again this provides support for previous research, which has shown that lack of confidence can be a greater barrier for those with mental health conditions, compared with other types of impairment (Sejersen et al., 2009). In a DWP survey of 3,899 incapacity benefit customers who took part in the Pathways to Work programme (2009), 63 per cent of customers with a mental health condition mentioned lack of confidence as a barrier to working, compared with 33 per cent of customers without a mental health condition.

3.4 What would help?

The Life Opportunities Survey asks respondents what has helped, or would help, them to work.³⁴ As with the results presented in section 3.3, the findings for disabled people in employment and those who are unemployed are based on the sample of respondents who say that they are limited in the type or amount of work they can do in some way. However, the findings for economically inactive disabled people are based on all respondents in that category.

Table 3.5 shows that disabled people in all three employment groups are most likely to say that modified hours or days or reduced work hours had helped, or would help, them to work. The percentage is highest among those unemployed and seeking work (36 per cent). Modified duties are also mentioned by unemployed and economically inactive people (17 per cent and 15 per cent respectively), but less so by those in work (eight per cent).

Unemployed respondents are more likely than those in other groups to say that other equipment or services would help them (19 per cent). Economically inactive respondents are more likely than others to say that building modifications would help them (16 per cent).

Overall, unemployed respondents are more likely than those in the other groups to say that at least one of the listed items would help them (see Table 3.5).

These findings provide more robust statistical support to results from a mixed method study of 129 respondents who felt they could have stayed in a job if support, adaptations or adjustments had been offered (Williams et al, 2008). The main kinds

³⁴ Question wording: [if in employment] "Has anything on this card helped you at work?" [if unemployed and looking for work or if economically inactive] "Would you need any of the following to be able to work?"

Table 3.5: What would help ability to work, disabled people aged 16 to 64 in Great Britain, 2009-2011

	Employed %	Unemployed %	Economically inactive %
Modified hours or days or reduced work hours	23	36**	24
Modified duties	8	17**	15**
A job coach or personal assistant	5	5	7**
Changes to your work area or work equipment	12	9	7**
Building modifications, such as handrails or ramps, easy-to-access work area, toilets or lifts	5	7	16**
Tax credits	10	16**	8*
Other equipment or services (please specify)	3	19**	11**
None of these	58	41**	59
Unweighted bases	2,453	231	1,709

Source: Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011.

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

of help that respondents in this study mentioned were: more support and understanding generally; more flexibility as to days and hours of work and time off; changes to their role or to work practices; aids and adaptations at work.

Variations by gender and age

Among both disabled people in work and those who are economically inactive, women are more likely than men to say that modified hours or days had helped or would help them (28 per cent compared with 17 per cent for those in work; 27 per cent compared with 21 per cent for those economically inactive).³⁵

The only variation by age group is that young disabled people (aged 16 to 24) are more likely than older people to say that a job coach had helped them or would help them (for those in work, 12 per cent compared with four per cent in the rest of the sample; for those economically inactive, 16 per cent compared with six per cent).

³⁵ It is not possible to examine sub-group differences for disabled people who are unemployed and seeking work, as base sizes are too small. It is also not possible to carry out reliable analysis by ethnicity or qualification level, again because of small base sizes.

This is likely to be linked to a greater availability of job coaches for this age group (see below for further details).

Variations by impairment type

For disabled people in work, the things that they say had helped or would help them overcome limitations or barriers vary by impairment type: modified hours or days or reduced work hours are mentioned most frequently by those with a mental health impairment (36 per cent); respondents with a mobility impairment are more likely than other respondents to say they had been helped by modified duties (17 per cent). Respondents with vision impairment are more likely than other respondents to say they had been helped both by changes to their work area (24 per cent) and by building modifications (16 per cent).

Patterns are different for economically inactive respondents: those with communication impairment are more likely than other respondents to say they would be helped by a job coach (21 per cent), changes to work area (20 per cent), and building modifications (24 per cent). A job coach is also mentioned more frequently by those with a learning impairment (20 per cent) and those with an intellectual impairment (24 per cent), compared with other respondents. Those with a hearing impairment and mobility impairment are more likely than other respondents to say they would be helped by building modifications (32 per cent and 24 per cent). Respondents with a behavioural impairment are more likely than other respondents to mention changes to work area (17 per cent).

The findings indicate that a job coach has been helpful for some young disabled people (aged 16 to 24) and those with certain impairments: communication, learning and intellectual impairments. This is relevant to the various 'supported employment' initiatives that have been instigated recently in the UK and abroad which offer intensive employment support to young people with more severe impairments (often learning impairments). A job coach has been identified as an important feature of these initiatives (European Commission, 2012). Evidence suggests that this type of initiative can be effective in helping people into sustained work (OECD, 2012).

4. Unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying and harassment at work

Key findings

- Analysis of the Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008 shows that disabled people were much more likely than non-disabled people to say they had experienced some form of unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work in the previous two years (27 per cent compared with 17 per cent).
- Specifically, 19 per cent of disabled people said they had experienced unfair treatment, 12 per cent discrimination, two per cent sex-based harassment and 14 per cent other bullying or harassment.
- Disabled people were also more likely to say that they had experienced other incidents in the previous two years “in a negative way” involving work colleagues, clients or customers.
- More than a third (37 per cent) say they had been treated in a disrespectful or rude way, 23 per cent that they had been insulted or had offensive remarks made about them, 14 per cent that they had been humiliated or ridiculed in connection with their work, and nine per cent that they had experienced actual physical violence at work.
- In the 2010 Citizenship Survey, 15 per cent of disabled people in England and Wales who had looked for work in the previous five years said they had been discriminated against when they had been refused or turned down for a job; double the proportion for non-disabled people (seven per cent).

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we examine the extent to which disabled people experience unfair treatment in the workplace. This chapter covers experience of: unfair treatment and discrimination at work; harassment, bullying, hostility and targeted violence; and unfair treatment when looking for work. Following chapters then focus in more detail on the nature of unfair treatment and its implications.

The main source for the findings in this chapter is the Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008.³⁶ This is by far the most relevant and comprehensive data source for examining unfair treatment at work. However, it should be noted that the survey was conducted some time ago (interviewing took place in 2008). In addition, the sample of disabled people is quite small (502). This means that even statistically significant differences need to be treated with some caution, and the scope for more detailed analysis (e.g. by impairment type) is greatly reduced.

The Fair Treatment at Work Survey defines disability according to specific types of condition that are listed for respondents to select, rather than by using a more open question that allows for self-definition of impairments or conditions as in the Labour Force Survey and Life Opportunities Survey. Respondents were asked the question “Do you have any of the following long-standing conditions?” and were shown a list with the following options: ‘deafness or severe hearing impairment’; ‘blindness or severe visual impairment’; ‘a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, lifting or carrying’; ‘a learning difficulty; a long-standing psychological or emotional condition’; ‘other, including any long-standing illness’; ‘no, I do not have a long-standing condition’. Respondents who reported any conditions at this question were then asked “Does this long-standing health problem or disability mean you have substantial difficulties doing day-to-day activities?”

This chapter focuses on the 502 respondents who said they have one or more long-standing conditions, and the smaller group of 170 respondents within this who said that their condition results in substantial difficulties doing day-to-day activities. Because of the way the questions were asked, the latter group may be considered to meet the EA definition of disability, but it makes up only four per cent of the total sample. The larger group of 502 respondents, however, makes up 12 per cent of the total, which is closer to the proportion of EA disabled people in the working population (around 10 per cent).³⁷

Despite the various caveats outlined above, the Fair Treatment at Work Survey enables a comprehensive examination of the experience of unfair treatment among both disabled and non-disabled people.

³⁶ Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. Employment Market Analysis and Research, *Fair Treatment at Work Survey, 2008* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], February 2010. SN: 6382, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6382-1>

³⁷ LFS Q3 2012

An additional source of data on unfair treatment in the workplace is the British Workplace Behaviour Survey, which was conducted in 2007-08 and covers similar issues to Fair Treatment at Work. Selective reference to the British Workplace Behaviour Survey has been made at various points throughout this chapter because it provides some useful analysis by impairment type, but findings should be treated with caution for two main reasons: Firstly, the survey is conducted with a follow-up group of respondents from an 'omnibus' survey which uses quota sampling, a less robust method than the random probability sampling approach used in the Fair Treatment at Work survey.³⁸ Secondly, the sample of disabled people in the British Workplace Behaviour Survey is small (284 respondents), and the resulting groups based on three impairment types are very small (between 52 and 117 respondents in the three groups).

Finally, we include survey data in this chapter from the 2010 Citizenship Survey, which asks about experiences of discrimination when looking for work.

4.2 Experience of unfair treatment at work

The Fair Treatment at Work Survey covers people in Great Britain who were in employment at the time of the interview, or had worked during the preceding two years, either on a permanent basis or as a temporary employee or worker, fixed term, casual or agency worker.

The survey includes a number of questions that address workplace problems.³⁹ Respondents are asked whether they have experienced the following in the previous two years:

- Unfair treatment compared to others in the workplace;
- Discrimination at work;
- Sex-based harassment at work;
- Other forms of bullying and harassment.

³⁸ Omnibus surveys provide access to a representative sample of adults, who are asked questions on a variety of topics. Most Omnibus surveys use quota sampling methods, e.g. with quotas for gender, age and work status.

³⁹ Question wording: Q5.4: In the last two years, have you ever been treated unfairly compared to others in your workplace? Q5.5: In the last two years, do you think you have experienced discrimination at work? Q5.6: Sex-based harassment at work is any unwelcome sex or gender related behaviour that creates a hostile working environment. In the last two years, have you experienced sex-based harassment at work? This could be sexual in nature or be related to the fact you are a man/woman. Q5.7: Now I would like you to think about other forms of bullying and harassment (not sexual harassment) that create a hostile working environment. In the last two years, have you experienced bullying or harassment at work?

Table 4.1: Experience of unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work, all in work in last two years, Great Britain, 2008

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All %
Unfair treatment	13	19**	14
Discrimination	7	12**	8
Sex-based harassment	1	2	1
Other forms of bullying and harassment	6	14**	7
Any of the above	17	27**	18
Unweighted bases	3,462	502	3,973

Source: Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

These issues can be examined individually, and they can also be combined to give a measure of any experience of unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment. Findings from the survey are summarised in Table 4.1, which compares disabled people and non-disabled people. The sample of disabled people includes all respondents who said they had one or more of a list of conditions (see earlier section 4.1 for details of the survey question).

Overall, 18 per cent of respondents said they had experienced some kind of unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work during the preceding two years. This is considerably higher among disabled people than non-disabled people: 27 per cent compared with 17 per cent.

Looking at the specific items included in the survey separately, disabled people were also more likely than non-disabled people to report unfair treatment (19 per cent compared with 13 per cent), discrimination (12 per cent compared with seven per cent) and other forms of bullying or harassment (14 per cent compared with six per cent). There was no significant difference in the proportion who reported sex-based harassment.

The survey showed no significant differences by impairment type or by other characteristics within the sample of around 500 disabled respondents. In general, the small size of the sample of disabled people makes it difficult to identify statistically significant differences.

However, disabled people who said they were limited in their day-to-day activities (the smaller sample of 170 respondents) were more likely than other disabled people to say they had experienced unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment. Specifically, they were more likely to report unfair treatment (25 per cent compared with 17 per cent), discrimination (18 per cent compared with 10 per cent) and other forms of bullying and harassment (21 per cent compared with 11 per cent). There was no difference for sex-based harassment.

Overall, the findings in this section indicate that disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to experience unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work, and that incidence is higher among those with more limiting conditions.

4.3 Other poor treatment at work

The Fair Treatment at Work Survey also asked respondents whether they had experienced other types of negative incidents that could constitute bullying or harassment in the previous two years involving people they work with, clients or customers. These incidents included: 'Being insulted or having offensive remarks made about you'; 'Being treated in a disrespectful or rude way'; 'Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work'; and 'Actual physical violence at work'.⁴⁰

Disabled people were more likely than non-disabled people to say they had experienced all four types of negative incident (see Table 4.2). More than a third of disabled people (37 per cent) said they had been treated in a disrespectful or rude way, while 23 per cent said they had been insulted or had offensive remarks made about them. One in seven (14 per cent) had been humiliated or ridiculed in connection with their work, and nine per cent had experienced actual physical violence at work.

On these issues, there were no differences by impairment type, or between disabled people who said they were limited in their day-to-day activities and other disabled people.

In total, 53 per cent of disabled people said they had experienced either one of the negative incidents covered in Table 4.2, or some form of unfair treatment, bullying,.

⁴⁰ Question wording: "Thinking about your current / most recent employer over the last two years, how often, if at all, have you experienced any of the following in a negative way, this could be from people you work with or from clients or customers: ...Being insulted or having offensive remarks made about you ...Being treated in a disrespectful or rude way ...Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work ...Actual physical violence at work". Response options: Never, Once, Now and then, Monthly, Weekly, Daily.

Table 4.2: Negative experiences at work, all in work in last two years, Great Britain, 2008

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All %
Being insulted or having offensive remarks made about you	17	23**	18
Being treated in a disrespectful or rude way	25	37**	26
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	8	14**	8
Actual physical violence at work	5	9**	5
Unweighted bases	3,495	506	4,001

Source: Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

harassment or discrimination, as covered in Table 4.1. This compares with 38 per cent of non-disabled people

As already noted above, it is not possible to discern differences by impairment type on these issues from the Fair Treatment at Work Survey data. However, the British Workplace Behaviour Survey included similar questions and attempted to analyse differences by impairment type. This survey was conducted in 2007-08 with a sample of 4,000 people in Great Britain who were either in work or had worked in the previous two years (i.e. the same population as the Fair Treatment at Work Survey). It included a range of survey questions about experience of ill treatment, and analysed these for three main respondent groups: people with a learning difficulty, psychological or emotional condition; people with a 'physical condition'; and people with other conditions. Experience of various forms of ill treatment was found to be highest among respondents with a learning difficulty, psychological or emotional condition, and lowest among those with a 'physical condition'. However, as noted in section 4.1, findings from this survey should be treated with caution, due to the sampling method and small sample sizes for impairment groups.

4.4 Unfair treatment when looking for work

As reported in Chapter 3, according to the Life Opportunities Survey, 17 per cent of disabled people who were unemployed and seeking work said that they were limited in the type or amount of work they could do by the attitudes of employers or work

colleagues. This issue is addressed more directly by the 2010 Citizenship Survey, which covers England and Wales and uses a definition of disability that is compatible with the Equality Act 2010 definition. The survey asked people who had looked for work in the previous five years whether they thought they had been “discriminated against when they had been refused or turned down for a job”. In total, 15 per cent of disabled people said that they thought they had been discriminated against in such circumstances, higher than the proportion for non-disabled people (seven per cent).

5. The characteristics of unfair treatment

Key findings

- Disabled respondents to The Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008 said that the main reasons for unfair treatment at work were the attitudes or personalities of other people (52 per cent) or relationships at work (43 per cent); 30 per cent said that the unfair treatment they had experienced was because of their disability or condition.
- Among disabled people who had worked in the last two years, seven per cent said that over that period they had experienced unfair treatment or discrimination at work because of their disability, long-term illness or other health problem. According to the Life Opportunities Survey, six per cent of disabled people currently in work have been treated unfairly by their employer or work colleagues in the preceding 12 months because of a health condition, illness or impairment or a disability.
- Unfair treatment of and discrimination against disabled people at work takes a variety of forms, most commonly: the type of work disabled people are given, being ignored, working hours, assessment of work performance or appraisal, and workload. The Life Opportunities Survey found that unfair treatment was often related to being given fewer responsibilities than people wanted.
- An employer or manager is the person most likely to be named by disabled people as responsible for unfair treatment at work: 68 per cent of respondents to the Fair Treatment at Work Survey said this, and 78 per cent to the Life Opportunities Survey.
- The Fair Treatment at Work Survey shows that more than half of disabled people who had experienced a workplace problem said they tried to resolve the problem informally (58 per cent), while 72 per cent said they discussed the issue with their employer. In addition, 40 per cent said they had had a formal meeting and 35 per cent had put their concerns in writing. In four per cent of cases, disabled respondents had made an application to an Employment Tribunal.
- Disabled people were more likely than non-disabled people to have experienced a negative outcome from a workplace problem affecting their physical health and physical well-being (48 per cent), their psychological health and well-being (47 per cent), their financial well-being (31 per cent) and their personal relationships (29 per cent).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the nature of unfair treatment in the workplace, including the reason for unfair treatment and who was responsible. It also looks at the impact of unfair treatment on the people who experience it.

Once again, the main source for the findings in this chapter is the Fair Treatment at Work Survey (see section 3.1 for a discussion of the use of this survey).⁴¹ Additional survey evidence is provided by the Life Opportunities Survey.⁴²

5.2 Reasons for unfair treatment

The Fair Treatment at Work Survey asked respondents who reported unfair treatment in the previous two years what they thought were the reasons for this unfair treatment.⁴³

Disabled people were most likely to say that it was because of the attitude or personality of other people (52 per cent) or people's relationships at work (43 per cent), while 30 per cent said that it was because of their disability or condition (this issue is discussed in more detail in section 5.3). Around one in five said that it was because of their position in the organisation (22 per cent), that 'it's just the way things are at work' (23 per cent) or because of groups or cliques at work (21 per cent).

It is important to note that the sample of disabled people answering this question is small (105 respondents). Nevertheless, there are some statistically significant differences between disabled and non-disabled people. As would be expected, the proportion who gave their disability or condition as a reason was higher for disabled people (30 per cent compared with five per cent), but disabled people were also more likely to say that the unfair treatment they had experienced was because of the attitude or personality of others (52 per cent compared with 38 per cent), because of family or caring responsibilities (14 per cent compared with seven per cent) and because of their union membership (seven per cent compared with one per cent). This last reason is likely to be related to the higher proportion of disabled people working in the highly unionised public sector, as noted in Chapter 2.

⁴¹ Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. Employment Market Analysis and Research, *Fair Treatment at Work Survey, 2008* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], February 2010. SN: 6382, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6382-1>

⁴² Office for National Statistics. Social Survey Division, *Life Opportunities Survey: Wave One, 2009-2011* [computer file]. 3rd Edition. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], March 2012. SN: 6653, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6653-2>

⁴³ Question wording: 5.10A "I'd now like to ask you about the unfair treatment you said you experienced. Was this due to anything on this screen? You can choose as many as you like or none at all".

Table 5.1: Reasons for unfair treatment at work, all who have experienced unfair treatment in the last two years, Great Britain, 2008

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All %
Your position in the organisation	20	22	21
It's just the way things are where you work	24	23	24
Your performance at work	12	12	12
The attitude or personality of others	38	52*	40
People's relationships at work (e.g. favouritism)	33	43	35
People having a group or clique at work and excluding you from it	20	21	21
Your age	10	5	9
Your gender	5	6	5
Your religion or beliefs	3	2	3
Your sexual orientation (e.g. gay, straight, lesbian, bi-sexual etc)	1	0	1
Your race or ethnic group or the colour of your skin	7	6	7
A disability you may have	1	14**	3
A long-term illness or other health problem	4	26**	8
- <i>Disability/long-term illness or other health problem combined</i>	5	30**	9
Union membership	1	7**	2
Being pregnant	3	2	3
Taking maternity / paternity / parental leave	3	4	4
Your nationality	6	4	6
Your physical appearance or the way you dress	4	10	5
Your family or caring responsibilities	7	14*	8
Your marital status	1	3	1
Your accent	6	3	6
Where you live	2	4	2
Your social class	3	2	3
Your personality	3	3	3
Other	2	2	2
None of these	20	18	20
Unweighted bases	431	105	536

Source: Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

5.3 Is unfair treatment related to health condition or disability?

As already described, around a third of disabled respondents to the Fair Treatment at Work survey reported unfair treatment or discrimination at work in the last two years because of a disability, long-term illness or other health problem. This equates to seven per cent of the total sample of disabled people.

The Life Opportunities Survey covers this issue slightly differently. All respondents are asked firstly whether they feel that they have been treated unfairly by others for any of a number of reasons, including a disability or a health condition, illness or impairment. If they feel they have been treated unfairly because of a disability or a health condition, illness or impairment, they are then asked about *who* they feel treated them unfairly; the list of response categories includes an employer or work colleagues, alongside other options (e.g. family, health staff).

Six per cent of disabled respondents to the Life Opportunities Survey currently in work say they have been treated unfairly by their employer or work colleagues in the preceding 12 months because of a health condition, illness or impairment or a disability. Despite the difference in question wording and also the time frame covered in the questions (previous two years in Fair Treatment at Work, one year in the Life Opportunities Survey), the proportions in the two surveys are very similar.

In interpreting these findings, it is important to note that, while some respondents report unfair treatment as being because of a health condition, illness or impairment or a disability, other respondents may have similar experiences but describe them as being due to other reasons, such as the attitude of other people (as seen in Table 5.1). As with many of the other findings, responses are based on the perceptions and judgements of survey respondents.

Analysis by impairment type

The Life Opportunities Survey also allows analysis by impairment type. Unfair treatment because of a disability or impairment was particularly likely to be reported by people with: memory impairment (21 per cent); speaking impairment (20 per cent); behavioural impairment (19 per cent); and mental health conditions (18 per cent);⁴⁴ see Table 5.2.

The analysis of the British Workplace Behaviour Survey shown in Chapter 4 indicates that respondents with a learning difficulty, psychological or emotional condition were most likely to experience unfair treatment at work. The findings from the Life

⁴⁴ Findings for two of these groups (speaking and behavioural impairments) should be treated with caution as the base size is less than 50

Table 5.2: Whether treated unfairly because of a health condition, illness, impairment or a disability, by their employer or work colleagues in the past 12 months, disabled people in employment in Great Britain, 2009-2011

	%	Unweighted bases
Sight	13	95
Hearing	12	146
Speaking	20	32
Mobility	12	373
Dexterity	10	287
Long-term pain	8	1,157
Breathing	7	107
Learning	13	109
Intellectual	-	[18]
Behavioural	19	34
Memory	21	114
Mental health condition	18	195
Chronic health conditions	12	690
Other	14	57
All disabled people in work	6	2,817

Source: Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011.

Notes: Because respondents can have more than one impairment type (i.e. the categories are not mutually exclusive), it is not possible to have a single reference group. Instead, for each impairment type, a comparison has been made between those with the specific impairment and all other respondents with an impairment. Significance testing is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Unweighted bases sum to more than the total number of disabled people because some people report more than one impairment.

Opportunities Survey presented here support these results by indicating that people with similar types of impairment (albeit classified differently) are more likely to give their disability or impairment as the reason for them experiencing unfair treatment.

5.4 What sort of unfair treatment?

Both the Fair Treatment at Work Survey and the Life Opportunities Survey ask about the kind of the unfair treatment experienced by respondents and how it manifests itself at work. In both surveys, respondents are offered a list of answer categories,

although the lists differ. Together the findings indicate the range of forms that unfair treatment and discrimination at work can take.

In the Fair Treatment at Work Survey, 66 disabled respondents who said that unfair treatment or discrimination was the most serious problem they faced at work (13 per cent of the total sample) were asked what form it took. The most common response was that it was related to the type of work they were given; this was mentioned by 16 respondents (29 per cent), while 15 respondents said they were ignored (26 per cent), 13 respondents mentioned working hours (23 per cent), 13 mentioned assessment of work performance or appraisal (23 per cent) and 12 respondents mentioned workload (21 per cent). These findings were similar for non-disabled people who said that unfair treatment or discrimination was the most serious problem they faced at work.

In the Life Opportunities Survey, 228 disabled respondents in work who said they had been treated unfairly by an employer or work colleagues in the past 12 months because of a health condition, illness or impairment or a disability (six per cent of all disabled people in work) were asked if they had experienced any of a list of different situations at work. As evident in Table 5.3, respondents were most likely to say that

Table 5.3: Nature of unfair treatment because of a health condition, illness, impairment or a disability by an employer or work colleagues in the past 12 months, disabled people in employment in Great Britain, 2009-2011

	%
Been given fewer responsibilities than you wanted	24
Been denied a transfer	6
Not been promoted	15
Been paid less than other workers in similar jobs working the same hours	7
Been denied other work-related benefits	11
Been refused a job interview	11
Been refused a job	12
None of these	48
Unweighted base	228

Source: Life Opportunities Survey, Wave One, 2009-2011.

the unfair treatment they had experienced took the form of being given fewer responsibilities than they wanted (24 per cent). They also reported not being promoted (15 per cent); being refused a job (12 per cent); being denied other work-related benefits (11 per cent) and being refused a job interview (11 per cent).

5.5 Perpetrators/ locus of responsibility

A sample of 125 disabled respondents to the Fair Treatment at Work Survey who had experienced unfair treatment or discrimination at work, and the 228 respondents to the Life Opportunities Survey who felt they had been treated unfairly by others because of a disability or health condition, illness or impairment, were asked who they felt was responsible for this treatment.

The majority of respondents to the Fair Treatment at Work Survey (68 per cent) said that the problem was caused by an employer, supervisor(s) or manager(s), while 23 per cent said it was a colleague. In a minority of cases, respondents said that it was a more junior member of staff (three per cent), a customer (four per cent) or the organisation as a whole (14 per cent). These findings were similar for non-disabled people.

Half (50 per cent) of the 228 disabled respondents to the Life Opportunities Survey said that it was their employer who was responsible for the unfair treatment, while a further 28 per cent said it was both their employer and work colleagues. The remaining 22 per cent said it was work colleagues (not their employer).

Both surveys indicate that most instances of unfair treatment are attributed to employers or managers.

5.6 Impact of unfair treatment

The Fair Treatment at Work Survey asked questions about the impact of unfair treatment, discrimination and harassment at work and about the resolution of any such issues of all respondents who reported a problem at work of any kind in the previous two years (249 respondents).

A fifth (20 per cent) of these respondents to the Fair Treatment at Work Survey left the organisation because of the problem they experienced; 17 per cent left the organisation, but not because of the problem; and 62 per cent were still working for the same organisation at the time of the survey.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Question wording: "Did the problem impact at all on ? IF YES: How great was the impact?"

Of the 101 disabled people who left the organisation because of the problem, 59 per cent left of their own accord, whereas 20 per cent were dismissed and 13 per cent made redundant.

Where disabled respondents did not leave the organisation because of the problem (94 respondents), 43 per cent said their employer took action to address the problem, while 13 per cent said they came to a compromise with their employer and 17 per cent per cent said that nothing happened.

There were no significant differences on any of these issues between disabled and non-disabled respondents.

Turning to the impact of the problem on respondents, findings from the Fair Treatment at Work Survey shown in Table 5.4 indicate that disabled respondents were more likely than non-disabled respondents to have experienced a negative outcome across a range of different dimensions. Among disabled people who had experienced a problem at work, 48 per cent (compared with 21 per cent of non-disabled people) said that the problem had a severe or moderate impact on their physical health and physical well-being, and 47 per cent (compared with 26 per cent) said the same about the impact on their psychological health and well-being. In addition, 31 per cent (compared with 20 per cent) said the problem had a severe or moderate impact on their financial well-being and 29 per cent (compared with 16 per cent) on personal relationships.

As noted by Fevre et al. (2013), other studies have found evidence of a negative effect on health due to workplace bullying, with most of the effects cited in the literature being psychological or emotional. They also note the potentially complex issue of cause and effect in relation to problems at work. For example, it is not clear whether the unfair treatment examined in this report is carried out against people who already have a condition or disability, or whether the unfair treatment at work has caused or been responsible for the onset or worsening of a condition. It is important to note this complexity when interpreting the findings.

In terms of resolution, more than half of disabled respondents to the Fair Treatment at Work Survey who had experienced a workplace problem said they tried to resolve the problem informally (58 per cent), while 72 per cent discussed the issue with their employer.⁴⁶ In addition, 40 per cent had a formal meeting and 35 per cent put their concerns in writing. In four per cent of cases, disabled respondents made an application to an Employment Tribunal (see Table 5.5).

⁴⁶ Question wording: "May I just check, did you, or anyone acting on your behalf, ..."

Table 5.4: Impact of workplace problems, all with a problem at work in the last two years, Great Britain, 2008

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All %
<i>Severe or moderate impact on</i>			
Financial well-being	21	31**	22
Physical health and physical well-being	21	48**	26
Psychological health and well-being	26	47**	29
Relationship with your partner or other close family members	16	29**	18
Unweighted bases	1,049	249	1,298

Source: Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

Table 5.5: How workplace problems were resolved, all in work in last two years, Great Britain, 2008

	Non-disabled %	Disabled %	All %
<i>Did you, or anyone acting on your behalf...</i>			
Try to resolve the problem informally?	51	58	52
Put your concerns about the issue that led to the problem in writing to your employer? This includes letters, faxes and emails.	28	35	29
Discuss the issue that led to the problem with your employer, either face-to-face or by telephone?	65	72	66
Go to a formal meeting where you and a manager or senior person at the place where you worked sat down together to discuss the issue that led to the problem?	32	40*	33
Make an application to an Employment Tribunal about this problem?	3	4	3
Unweighted bases	1,049	249	1,298

Source: Fair Treatment at Work Survey 2008

Notes: Reference groups are shown in bold. Significance testing which compares each group with the related reference group is indicated as follows: * significant difference at 95% level; ** significant difference at 99% level.

The only difference between disabled and non-disabled respondents was that disabled respondents were more likely to have had a formal meeting (40 per cent compared with 32 per cent).

Further details of Employment Tribunals can be obtained from administrative data covering Great Britain. In 2011-2012, there were 7,700 disability discrimination claims.⁴⁷ Of these, three per cent were successful at tribunal, while 11 per cent were unsuccessful at tribunal, with a further three per cent dismissed at a preliminary hearing, and seven per cent struck out (not at a hearing). Cases were most likely to have resulted in an ACAS conciliated settlement (45 per cent), while 31 per cent of cases were withdrawn. These figures are broadly similar to other types of discrimination claims.

These findings indicate that while the way in which workplace problems were resolved was similar for disabled and non-disabled people (as described above), the impact of the problem on disabled people's lives and relationships was greater than for non-disabled people.

⁴⁷ Employment Tribunals and EAT Statistics, 2011-12 (2012), Ministry of Justice.

6. Wider attitudes towards unfair treatment at work

Key findings

- Working respondents to the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) 2006, agreed with the statement that “the main problem faced by disabled people at work is other people’s prejudice, not their own lack of ability” (63 per cent). The majority also agreed with the statement that “attempts to give equal opportunities to people with a disability or a long-term illness in the workplace” have “not gone far enough” (57 per cent). These findings indicate that the majority of working people support equal opportunities for disabled people, at least in principle (all findings from 2006).
- Moreover, one in five working people (22 per cent) agreed with the statement that “in general, people with disabilities cannot be as effective at work as people without disabilities” (BSA 2009).
- In addition, similar proportions said that their colleagues would mind a lot or a little “if a suitably qualified person with a disability or long-term illness were appointed as their boss” (18 per cent); and that most people at work would feel very or fairly comfortable “if somebody referred to disabled people in a negative way in front of their colleagues” (19 per cent); these findings are from BSA 2006.
- In a separate survey of employers, over half (61 per cent) said they had made an employment-related adjustment for a disabled employee in the past, or planned to do so. Flexible working time or working arrangements were the most commonly reported employment-related adjustments.
- Concerns among employers in relation to employing disabled people included perceived risks to productivity; concerns over the implications (financial and otherwise) of making workplace adjustments; confusion over legislation and required practices, and negative perceptions of legislation.
- Organisations in one study were found to be twice as likely to discriminate against disabled people as treat them equally, during a mock-application process. This discrimination covered replying to applicants and invitations to interview.

6.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have focused on survey respondents' own perceptions of their experiences at work. This only provides a partial view, and it is therefore important to consider wider attitudes among the working population, as well as the views of employers. This chapter draws on the British Social Attitudes Survey 2006 and 2009 to give a more balanced picture of workplace practices and cultures in which to examine perceptions of unfair treatment.⁴⁸

The British Social Attitudes Survey provides evidence on the views of the working population. It is an annual survey, and questions relating to disability and work were asked in the 2006 and 2009 surveys. The findings from 2006 in particular are now somewhat out of date, but as there is a general lack of relevant survey data on this issue, these findings from the British Social Attitudes Survey provide the most recent evidence and a useful indication of public attitudes.

In this report, findings from the British Social Attitudes Survey are mostly analysed at the overall level to show the perceptions of the working population as a whole. In some cases, responses are analysed by disabled and non-disabled people. Disability is defined on the basis of the following question: "Do you have any long-term illness, health problems or disability. By long-term we mean that it can be expected to last for a year or more?" This is the same question as used in the LFS and other major surveys, but is not comparable with the EA definition as it does not identify whether the illness, health problem or disability limits daily activities.

This chapter also brings together research evidence on the perceptions of employers towards employing disabled people, using a range of sources.

6.2 Attitudes of the working population

Workplace prejudice

The 2006 British Social Attitudes Survey asked all respondents in work how much prejudice they thought there was at their workplace against employees with disabilities.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ National Centre for Social Research, *British Social Attitudes Survey, 2006* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], April 2008. SN: 5823, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-5823-1>; National Centre for Social Research, *British Social Attitudes Survey, 2009* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], February 2011. SN: 6695, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6695-1>

⁴⁹ Question wording: "In your workplace how much prejudice do you think there is against employees with disabilities?"

Table 6.1: Perceptions of the amount of workplace prejudice against employees with disabilities, people in employment in Great Britain, 2006

	%
A lot	2
A little	10
Hardly any	21
None	61
Don't know	5
Unweighted base	1,504

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 2006

Two per cent said there was a lot of prejudice and 10 per cent a little, while 21 per cent said there was 'hardly any', and 61 per cent none (see Table 6.1). The figures for disabled respondents were not significantly different to those for other respondents.⁵⁰ This suggests that there is not a fundamental difference in the perceptions of disabled and non-disabled people, although the lack of statistical significance could be due to the small number of disabled people within the sample.

This perceived level of prejudice was similar for other equality groups: the proportion of the working population who said there was a lot of or a little prejudice against employees with disabilities was 13 per cent, compared with 18 per cent saying this in relation to prejudice against employees of Asian origin, 13 per cent against employees who are black, and 11 per cent against employees who are gay or lesbian.

While most of the working population did not perceive there to be any prejudice against disabled people in their own workplace, they did feel that there was a problem of prejudice more generally. In the same survey (the 2006 British Social Attitudes Survey), the majority of respondents in work agreed that "the main problem faced by disabled people at work is other people's prejudice, not their own lack of ability" (63 per cent), while 12 per cent disagreed.

Findings from some other studies help to build a picture of generalised prejudice in the workplace. For example, there is consistent qualitative research evidence from disabled people (and some employers) about the perceived difficulties of disclosure

⁵⁰ Disability was defined according to the question: "Do you have any long-term illness, health problems or disability. By long-term we mean that it can be expected to last for a year or more?"

at work; some disabled people do not feel they can 'safely' tell people at work about their impairment for fear of discrimination or unfair treatment (Adams and Oldfield, 2011). Smeaton et al. (2009) found that 32 per cent of older workers with poor health did not feel able to approach their manager to discuss difficulties and possible arrangements to help (compared with 15 per cent of more healthy older workers. Linked to this, disabled people also often express a wish for measures in the workplace aimed at removing barriers to work to be inclusive; i.e. framed as being for all employees (EHRC, 2012).

In a focus group study with disabled respondents carried out for the EHRC by Adams and Oldfield (2011)⁵¹ on the experiences of disabled people in work, respondents most often complained of: ignorance about impairments and health conditions (including 'hidden conditions' such as dyslexia and dyspraxia); a related tendency to make negative assumptions about the capabilities of disabled people; a perception of disabled people as not fitting the image of the organisation; bullying and harassment including resentment by colleagues of perceived 'special treatment'.

Attitudes to disabled people at work

The British Social Attitudes survey has also examined the personal attitudes of the working population towards disabled people. In the 2009 survey, 22 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that "in general, people with disabilities cannot be as effective at work as people without disabilities", while 47 per cent disagreed and the remainder were neutral or did not give an answer. Respondents may have interpreted this statement in different ways, both in terms of the types of disabilities and the type of work they were thinking about. For example, perceptions of people with physical impairments in relation to manual work may be different to perceptions of the same impairments in relation to non-manual work. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that a substantial minority of the population at least question the ability of disabled people in relation to paid work.

In the 2006 British Social Attitudes Survey, respondents in work were asked whether they personally would mind "if a suitably qualified person with a disability or long-term illness were appointed as their boss". Just one per cent said they would mind a lot and six per cent a little (see Table 6.2). It is possible that many people would not be willing to admit to this view; another question therefore asked if respondents thought their *colleagues* would mind or not mind "if a suitably qualified person with a disability

⁵¹ Adams L and K Oldfield (2011) *Opening up work: the views of disabled people and people with long term health conditions*, EHRC Research Report 77.

Table 6.2: Attitudes to having a disabled person as boss, people in employment in Great Britain, 2006

	Personally would mind %	Colleagues would mind %
A lot	1	4
A little	6	14
Not mind	90	77
Other answer	2	2
Don't know	1	3
Unweighted base	750	750

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 2006

or long-term illness were appointed as their boss". As well as giving a broader perspective, this question makes it easier for respondents to acknowledge that this type of attitude exists.

In answer to this question, a higher proportion of respondents (18 per cent) said their colleagues would mind either a lot (four per cent) or a little (14 per cent), and this was higher among disabled respondents (25 per cent) than among non-disabled respondents (16 per cent). These results unsurprisingly suggest greater awareness of the issue among disabled people compared with non-disabled people, and they fit with findings from the Life Opportunities Survey that were described in the previous chapter: that disabled respondents who said they had been treated unfairly by an employer or work colleagues because of a health condition, illness or impairment or a disability often said that the unfair treatment was related to being given fewer responsibilities than they wanted or not being promoted.

Once again, the British Social Attitudes Survey findings are similar in relation to those with other protected characteristics; for example, the same proportion (18 per cent) said that their colleagues would mind either a lot or a little if a suitably qualified person who is gay or lesbian were appointed as their boss.

Language and behaviour in the workplace

The 2009 British Social Attitudes Survey asked about language and behaviour towards disabled people in the workplace.⁵² One in six people in work (16 per cent)

⁵² Question wording: Sometimes people refer to disabled people in a negative way. This could include making jokes or using offensive language. What do you think most people would feel if somebody

Table 6.3: Attitudes to negative language at work, people in employment in Great Britain, 2006

	At work in front of your boss %	At work in front of colleagues %
Most people would feel very comfortable	9	9
Most people would feel fairly comfortable	7	10
Most people would feel fairly uncomfortable	27	30
Most people would feel very uncomfortable	54	49
[I can't imagine this happening]	1	1
[Self-employed and doesn't apply]	2	1
Don't know	-	-
Unweighted base	1,264	1,264

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 2006

said that most people at work would feel very or fairly comfortable “if somebody referred to disabled people in a negative way in front of their boss”. This was defined as including “making jokes or using offensive language”. A slightly higher proportion (19 per cent) said that people would feel very or fairly comfortable if this happened in front of their colleagues.

Overall, the findings described above indicate a fairly consistent pattern, with around one in five people in the working population expressing views that acknowledge prejudice or discrimination towards disabled people. Specifically, 22 per cent agreed that “in general, people with disabilities cannot be as effective at work as people without disabilities”; 18 per cent said their colleagues would mind a lot or a little “if a suitably qualified person with a disability or long-term illness were appointed as their boss”; and 19 per cent said that most people at work would feel very or fairly comfortable “if somebody referred to disabled people in a negative way in front of their colleagues”.

Perceived impact of legislation

The above findings suggest that there is still work to be done to ensure that disabled people have equal opportunities at work. When asked about this issue in the 2006 British Social Attitudes Survey, the majority of employed respondents said that

referred to disabled people in this way in different situations.....at work - in front of your boss/at work – in front of colleagues?

Table 6.4: Attitudes to whether attempts to provide equal opportunities have gone far enough, people in employment in Great Britain, 2006

	Too far/much too far %	Not far enough/not nearly far enough %
People with a disability or a long-term illness	6	57
Black people and Asians	36	17
Women	11	38
Gay or lesbian people	18	17
Unweighted base	3,213	3,213

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 2006

“attempts to give equal opportunities to people with a disability or a long-term illness in the workplace” had “not gone far enough” (57 per cent), while six per cent said they had “gone too far (six per cent), and a further 32 per cent said that the situation was “about right”.⁵³

On this issue, a much larger proportion of respondents said that attempts had not gone far enough in relation to people with a disability or long-term illness, compared with other equality groups, as seen in Table 6.4. These findings indicate that the majority of the working public are supportive of attempts to give disabled people equal opportunities, at least in principle.

6.3 Employer perspectives

As noted in section 6.1, there is little recent evidence from employers on the treatment of disabled people at work. The most recent comprehensive study of employers was undertaken in 2009 (Dewson et al., 2009). This research study explored how organisations were responding to the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and 2005. It included a quantitative survey of 2,000 organisations with at least three employees, conducted at establishment level in Great Britain. The study also included 97 qualitative interviews, mostly at establishment level. Although it does not address the issue of unfair treatment, it provides some contextual data about practices in relation to disabled people and the perceived impact of the DDA.

⁵³ Question wording: Please use this card to say whether you think attempts to give equal opportunities to have gone too far or not gone far enough?

In the survey, 61 per cent of employers said they had made an employment-related adjustment for a disabled employee in the past, or planned to do so. Flexible working time or working arrangements were the most commonly reported employment-related adjustments (53 per cent and 50 per cent respectively). This matches the main priority expressed by disabled people both in employment and out of work (see Chapter 3). Almost half of employers said they had adapted the work environment, or had provided accessible parking.

Some employers cited the existence of the DDA as a driver for making employment-related adjustments (43 per cent) but this was rarely the only reason given. Where no employment-related adjustments had been made, this was usually because the respondent reported that there had been no demand for them, or that the necessary arrangements and adjustments were already in place.

Further insight into the employer perspective can be found in a recent qualitative study of small and medium-sized employers' attitudes and experiences of employing disabled people (Davidson, 2011). This study was based on 60 in-depth interviews with 30 employers, focus groups with employers and follow-up telephone interviews with a selection of employers.

While some employers did not consider there would be any difference in employing someone with either a physical or mental health condition, other employers thought that a mental health condition would be more unpredictable and therefore harder to manage in the workplace. Employers perceived difficulties in employing people with fluctuating health conditions because of the unpredictability that absences at short notice would introduce to work routines. Most employers also argued that employing a disabled person would depend on the specific role that was available and whether or not they 'could do the job' with their health condition. These findings suggest that some employers may be taking an inflexible view towards employing disabled people, rather than considering how a job or working conditions can be adapted.

Employers participating in the study perceived that the main uncertainties around employing (more) disabled people were the (un)suitability of the built environment, risks to productivity, risks to the disabled person, other staff and potentially customers, especially where the work was considered to be relatively dangerous and the potential negative impact on other staff if they had to compensate for any lost productivity. Employers also lacked detailed information and knowledge on specific health conditions which they thought made it difficult for them to judge the ability of a disabled applicant to carry out any specific role. Other research has found that employers in some small companies can have very narrow perceptions of disabled workers as wheelchair users and people with physical impairments (DRC, 2004).

Davidson (2011)'s findings confirm evidence from previous studies, which report on a range of concerns held by employers about employing disabled people. These concerns are highlighted by Davidson (2011):

- Employers can be 'put off' employing disabled people because they find it confusing to try and keep up with the changing terminology around impairment and being disabled (Berry, 2007). Some small employers also thought that disabled employees would 'claim discrimination' if a job offer did not work out (DRC, 2004).
- Kelly et al.(2005) found that employers perceive a range of barriers to making workplace adjustments, including the financial implications of doing so, the nature of the work premises and possible resentment from other staff members. They also found that employers held the perception that people with what they termed 'severe' sensory, physical or psychological impairments would be the most difficult to employ because of worries about reduced efficiency and potential disruption to the workplace.
- Qualitative research carried out for the DWP suggests that SMEs sometimes consider that government legislation to combat discrimination does not take account of the realities of the business world. In talking about disabled people, for example, some employers were concerned about having to manage sickness cover and deal with absenteeism, or make adjustments to the workplace. Employers look for candidates they perceive will 'fit' their organisation and not challenge their efforts to minimise absenteeism. This can be especially so in smaller companies and in jobs requiring low skill sets (Davidson, 2011).
- Other research with employers who had positive attitudes to disabled workers, has found that they considered the extra costs of employing disabled people to be associated with equipment and adaptations, additional training and supervision, extra paperwork in applying for grants and any sickness absences that the disabled person might take (Schneider and Dutton, 2002).

In addition, a recent report for EHRC found that some employers fear that disclosure of disability occurs only when something 'goes wrong' in the workplace when it might be too late for a solution to be found. Disclosure is necessary for employers to make adjustments but some recognise that disabled people are fearful of potential negative impacts on them. As a result, disabled people come to be seen as the problem rather than the workplace (EHRC, 2012).

As a counter to these concerns about financial implications, a study by Dewson et al. (2009) found that, among a sample of over 1,000 employers who had made

adjustments relating to the provision of flexible working patterns or hours for disabled people, the majority (73 per cent) had found the adjustments relatively easy to make. In a previous study of around 800 employers who had made adjustments, similar proportions had found it easy to change the location of a job (64 per cent) and to allow for special leave or extra time off (68 per cent). The majority of employers providing flexible working patterns and hours said there were no direct financial costs associated with doing so (71 per cent), and a similar outcome was reported by 63 per cent of employers changing the location of a job and 55 per cent allowing special leave or extra time off (Dewson et al., 2005). This suggests that the concerns expressed by employers in previous studies may reflect their *perceptions* of likely costs, rather than actual experience.

It is difficult to explore employers' potentially discriminatory decision-making processes regarding disabled people in a survey interview. However, one piece of research took an innovative approach, by sending fictionalised CVs to 120 private sector employers in Scotland who had placed job advertisements (MacRae and Laverty, 2006). A pair of matched CVs was sent to each company, differing only in whether or not the hypothetical applicant disclosed a disability (cerebral palsy or registered blind), which was included in a sentence in the first paragraph of the CV.

This research found that, overall, twice the number of companies discriminated against disabled people as treated them equally. Non-disabled people were twice as likely to get a reply from the employer, and non-disabled applicants were invited to twice as many interviews as were disabled people. Applications from disabled people were rejected at the first stage twice as often as those from non-disabled people (MacRae and Laverty, 2006).

Taken together, the evidence in this section suggests that many employers have taken steps to accommodate disabled people, partly in response to equality legislation. However, employers clearly have a range of concerns about the implications of employing disabled people, and the evidence from the study conducted by MacRae and Laverty, using fictionalised CVs, suggests that these concerns may translate into discrimination in recruitment practices.

The findings in this chapter provide a broader perspective to the findings on unfair treatment in the workplace. In previous chapters, we have seen that disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to report unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying and harassment at work. However, as with any survey data based on individual perceptions, there is a question of interpretation of these findings. For example, previous studies have suggested that "employees with disabilities may be more likely to report ill-treatment because their impairment or state of health

predisposes them to more negative perceptions of their experiences” (Fevre et al., 2013; 7). Also, as noted in the previous chapter, the cause and effect of unfair treatment of disabled people is not always clear. Unfair treatment at work may contribute to, or even cause the onset of, certain impairments, described as “exacerbating a vicious spiral of ill-treatment and health problems” (Fevre et al., 2013; 13).

What is clear from this chapter is that, among the wider working population and among employers, there is evidence of prejudice towards disabled people that, in some cases, can lead both to the direct discrimination reported by disabled people in chapter 3, as well as to the workplace culture that contributes to unfair treatment at work (described as “the attitude or personality of others” or “just the way things are at work” in the reasons for unfair treatment given by disabled people).

7. Concluding remarks and observations

This report has drawn together national survey data from a variety of sources to build a statistical picture of barriers to work and unfair treatment at work faced by disabled people. Where possible, this has been complemented with findings from other research that help to piece together a coherent account of the current state of play in Great Britain in regard to these important issues.

Employment activity and limitations

The findings show a position of relative disadvantage for disabled people compared with non-disabled people in terms of labour market participation, having a job, the type of work carried out and levels of pay. For example, disabled people are less likely than non-disabled people to be in employment (47 per cent compared with 77 per cent); are more likely to be economically inactive (47 per cent compared with 16 per cent); are more likely to work part-time when in work (33 per cent compared with 25 per cent); are less likely to work in professional or managerial roles (34 per cent compared with 43 per cent); and are less likely to earn more than £10 per hour (49 per cent compared with 55 per cent).

A key factor in these differences appears to be educational qualifications which are strongly linked to the likelihood of having a job. Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to lack such qualifications.

The findings presented in the report also highlight the fact that disabled people with certain kinds of impairments may encounter greater barriers to work than others. For example, very low employment rates are found among people with mental illness, phobia or panics (21 per cent) and those with learning difficulties (35 per cent). Only two fifths of people with depression or bad nerves are employed (42 per cent). Moreover, the unemployment rate is also high amongst people with mental illness, phobia and panics (30 per cent), people with learning difficulties (27 per cent) and people with depression or bad nerves (23 per cent).

Analysis by gender and age has also highlighted important issues. For men aged 25-54, disability is by far the main reason for economic inactivity; as a result, while just three per cent of non-disabled men in this age band are economically inactive, this is proportionately much higher among disabled people (35 per cent).

Differences in the employment rate between disabled and non-disabled people were less marked for women, but the findings on limitations and barriers to work indicate that disabled women can have a more complex set of limitations than men, including family and caring responsibilities in addition to a health condition or disability.

In general, the findings show that there are more and varied obstacles to work affecting disabled people when compared with non-disabled people. As well as being limited by a health condition or disability, disabled people also report barriers and limitations such as difficulties with transport, the attitudes of employers or colleagues, anxiety or lack of confidence, and issues relating to access and support. The main thing that would help reduce these limitations is a modification of working hours or days.

Unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying and harassment at work

Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to say they have experienced some form of unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work over a two-year period (27 per cent compared with 17 per cent). In 30 per cent of these cases, disabled people say that unfair treatment is *because of* their disability or condition, which equates to seven per cent of all disabled people in work.

In addition, disabled respondents are more likely than non-disabled respondents to have experienced a negative outcome from a workplace problem, such as a negative impact on physical or psychological health or well-being, their financial well-being or on personal relationships.

Wider attitudes to unfair treatment in the workplace

Data about the views and perceptions of disabled people form an important part of the evidence base, but are congruent with information about the views and attitudes of the wider working population and of employers. In particular, a substantial minority of the working population hold views about disabled people being less effective at work than non-disabled people and say they would be reluctant to work for a disabled 'boss'. They also show tolerance for disability-related harassment in the form of negative comments made about disabled people at work. Some employers have reservations about risks to productivity of employing disabled people and concerns about the cost and other implications of meeting the requirements of equality legislation. Taken together, these results suggest a general work culture that can be inflexible and not particularly welcoming of disabled people. This may account for the tendency noted in some research for disabled people to conceal their health condition or impairment at, or when applying for, work, rather than seek necessary and appropriate support.

As a whole, the findings in this report reveal a composite picture of disadvantage for disabled people at work. The findings indicate that unfair treatment or discrimination at work is part of a larger pattern of disadvantage for disabled people, including lower

employment rates, poorer quality jobs and multiple barriers to work, which include issues related to disability alongside other barriers.

Future research needs

The research evidence available for this report was stronger in some areas than in others. In particular, much of the most recent quantitative evidence relating to employee experiences of unfair treatment, discrimination and harassment, such as the Fair Treatment at Work survey, as well as evidence relating to attitudes of employers and the wider population, is already a few years old. This makes it difficult to know if the drivers of these discriminatory practices remain the same, and given the importance of these issues, it is crucial that these surveys (or similar alternatives) are repeated in the near future.

In addition, it would be very useful to conduct some qualitative research on unfair treatment and discrimination, and how this relates to the broader issues of labour market activity and barriers to work. Qualitative research with both employers and disabled people would help to unpack the complexity of the issues and help to understand how and why unfair treatment occurs.

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This report provides a quantitative analysis of the barriers to employment and unfair treatment in the workplace faced by disabled people in Great Britain.

It draws on published statistics provided by government and other reliable sources, and also includes the results of secondary analysis of existing survey and other data to augment and add detail to the quantitative evidence base.

The research shows that unfair treatment or discrimination at work is part of a larger pattern of disadvantage for disabled people, including lower employment rates, poorer quality jobs and multiple barriers to work.

The report also suggests a general work culture that can be inflexible and not particularly welcoming of disabled people.