

A Look at Accessibility Through the Eyes of Persons with Disabilities: A Mixed Methods Study

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Background

Nearly 61 million people live with disability the United States. Although strides have been made since the inception of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to improve accessibility across domains for persons with disabilities, there remains a significant amount of work to be done to achieve equitable access to public, workplace, recreational, and healthcare settings. Additionally, multiple domains of societal attitudes toward persons with disability remain a perceived barrier of the person with a disability.^{1,2}

Conclusion

Decreased levels of understanding across multiple domains were reported. Less than half of the Persons with lived experience did not have a positive experience worth sharing. Persons with disability would benefit from a targeted initiative to provide healthcare providers with training specific to the basic needs and expectations of a person living with a disability, as well as knowledge of ADA requirements. Additionally, awareness and knowledge of ADA requirements by policymakers, employers, and the general public could enhance the lived experience of persons with disability. A larger sample size is needed to validate the pilot study's findings.

Bottom Line:

- ❖ Accessibility Needs of Persons with Disabilities are *largely* unmet.
- ❖ ADA Knowledge by vested parties is largely viewed as *"Fair"* at best.



Methods

A mixed methods study was piloted using snowball sampling in the Chicagoland area via a semi-structured survey with open-ended questions. Multi-round thematic analysis was conducted to identify themes related to accessibility across domains.

Results

Theme 1: ADA Knowledge

- 67% rated self knowledge of the ADA as Fair, Poor or nil
- 84% Rated the publics knowledge as poor or Nil
- 66% rated Healthcare Providers knowledge as Fair or Poor'
- 50% rated Employers knowledge of the ADA as Fair to Good

Theme 2: Level of Understanding the Needs of a person with a disability

- 100 % rated policymakers' knowledge or understanding of the needs of a person with a disability as poor or none
- 100% rated the General Public's understanding of the needs of a person with a disability as poor

"some of the staff seem to be put off by meeting my needs with my chair; they don't understand that I just can't stand up and transfer"

"At times I don't think I get the care I deserve. They do the minimum, they don't have the proper equipment to do a transfer."

"I don't think the government cares – they don't prioritize the needs of a few people"

"some people try to help and just be nice but they don't realize that I just need a proper space to do it by myself" "But others are just plain selfish"

"I really don't have any positive experience regarding accessibility – I just make do with what is available, Traveling is a big hassle."

Results

15 Respondents	
Sex	9 Male, 6 Female
Age	21-78 years of age with a mean of 44 years of age
Ethnic Identity	63% Caucasian, 15% Asian, 7% multiracial, 7% Latinx, 7% unidentified
Injury/Impairment	15% quadriplegia 54% paraplegia 15% neurological weakness due to a condition 8% degenerative disease process 8% balance issues
Number of years lived with disability	6 months to 35 years. Mode : 8.5 years
Mobility Means	59% Manual Wheelchair 18% Power Wheelchair 12% Manual Wheelchair pushed by care partner 6% Walker with seat 6% Crutches
Employment Status	48% Unemployed/Disability 25% Employed Full-Time 8% Student 17% preferred not to disclose

References:
1) Wang, Z., Xu, X., Han, Q. et al. Factors associated with public attitudes towards persons with disabilities: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health* 21, 1058 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11139-2>
2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Disability and Health Data System (DHDS) [Internet]. [updated 2024 July; cited 2024 July 15]. Available from: <http://dhds.cdc.gov>