

Workplace Accessibility Awareness, Skills and Opportunities in IT, Healthcare, and Education

Narrative Report

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Prepared for:



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Research Methodology

The research was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the University of Phoenix among 459 US adults aged 21+ who are employed full-time at an organization with 2+ employees, has a title of manager or higher, has at least 1 direct report, and works in one of the following industries: Information Technology, Education, or Healthcare. Respondents in the Education industry must also work in one of the following areas: Elementary school, Secondary school (e.g., high school), Junior college/Community college, College/university, Technical and trade schools, Other schools and instruction, Educational support services, Ministry of Education/Department of Education, Tutoring services, or Research center/company that produces or supplies educational materials/products. The survey was conducted April 3-19, 2024.

For each industry, data are weighted where necessary by employee size to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. A post-weight was applied to ensure equal weight of each industry in the total.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 5.1 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest. All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Report Notes

Unless otherwise specified, all relationships discussed within subgroups are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Key subgroups mentioned in the report are:

- Industry:
 - Education (n=150)
 - Healthcare (n=153)
 - Information Technology (n=156)
- Organization size:
 - Small organizations – Less than 200 employees (n=140)
 - Medium organizations – 200 - 999 employees (n=114)
 - Large organizations – 1,000+ employees (n=205)

I. Accessibility in Internal Systems/Management

Managers report various commitments to accessibility and workers with disabilities at their organization. The majority report their organization includes disability in its diversity policy and provides the necessary resources to help support employees with disabilities at work. In fact, most also report their organization has an employee resource group (ERG) for employees with disabilities.

Digging deeper, a majority agree that their organization's managers and supervisors actively work with human resources to ensure employees with disabilities have the necessary resources, and most report managers and supervisors have the resources needed to support and manage employee accommodation requests.

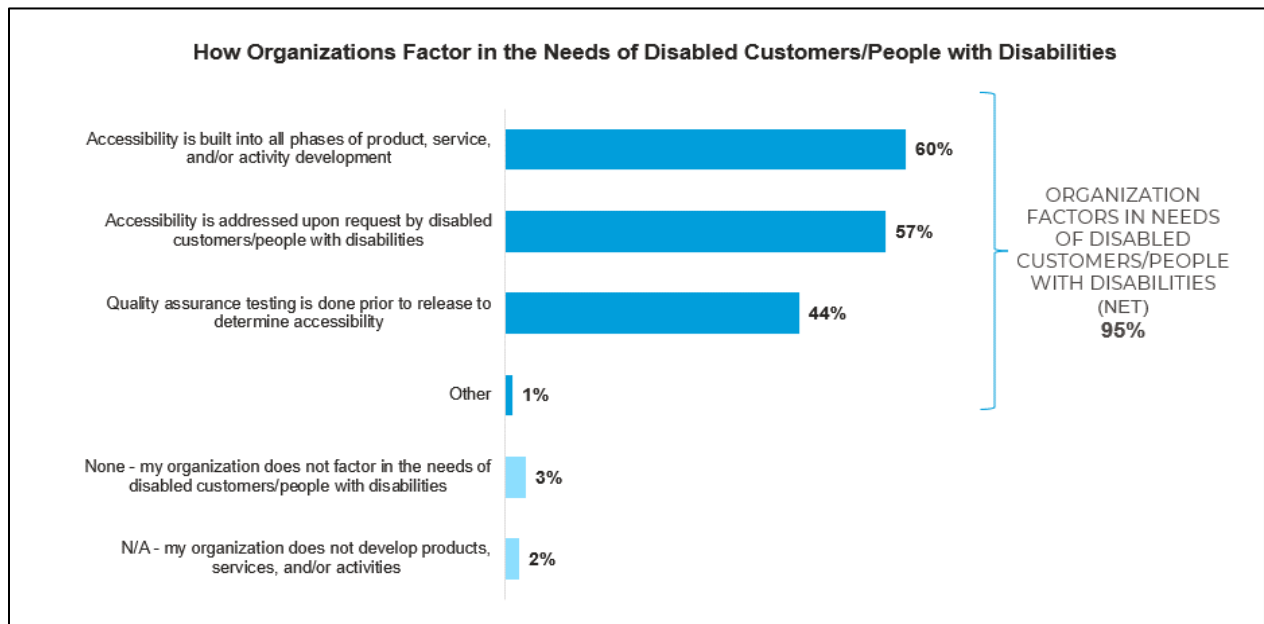
- More than 4 in 5 managers (83%) report their organization includes disability as an aspect of its diversity policy. Although close to two-thirds (65%) report it is intentionally included as one of the protected classes, only a quarter (25%) say it is intentionally highlighted in the organization's diversity policy. [Q800]
 - This seems to show that disability is identified as an aspect of diversity but there is still work to be done on raising awareness about disability as diversity. It is an important finding to support efforts to bolster professional development offerings about disability and how it intersects with other more commonly thought of markers of diversity.
 - Large and medium organizations are more likely than small organizations to say disability is *intentionally highlighted* in their diversity policy (30% and 29% vs. 17%).
- In fact, 3 out of 5 managers (60%) report their organization has an active employee resource group (ERG) for employees with disabilities. [Q805]
 - Another 1 in 5 (21%) say that they do not currently have one but plan to add one in the future.
 - Perhaps unsurprisingly, the likelihood of having an active ERG increases with size of the organization (small, 42% vs. medium, 62% and large, 71%).
- Most managers (90%) agree that their organization provides the necessary resources to help support employees with disabilities at work, with almost 2 in 5 (38%) *strongly agreeing* with this sentiment. [Q900/2]
 - More than 9 in 10 IT managers (93%) and education managers (91%) agree, compared to 84% of healthcare managers who say the same.
- An overwhelming majority of managers agree that the managers/supervisors at their organization actively work with human resources to ensure that their employees with disabilities have the resources they need (89%) and that managers/supervisors have the resources that they themselves need to appropriately support and manage employee accommodation requests (91%). [Q900/3,5]

II. Accessibility in Developing Products, Services, and/or Activities

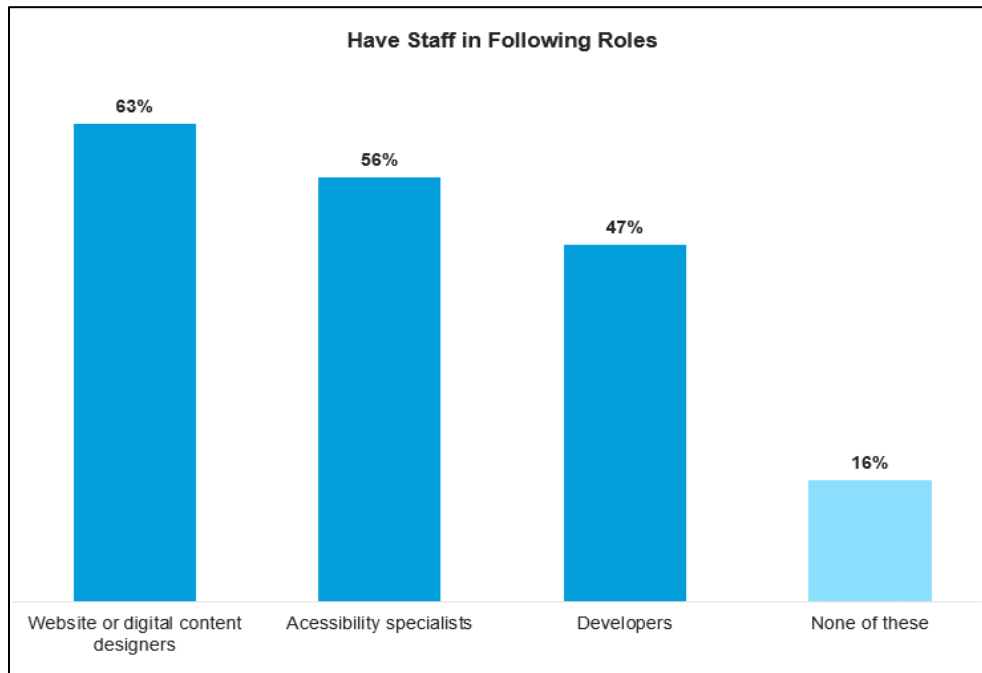
While many managers report their organizations factor in the needs of disabled customers/people with disabilities in the development of products, services, and/or activities, there is room for more organizations to enact some of the specific steps posed in the survey like quality assurance testing.

Despite many having developers, accessibility specialists, or website/digital content designers on staff, there is room for improvement when it comes to the proportions of developers and website/digital content designers who have the accessibility skills to meet their organizations goals.

- Slightly more than half of managers report that their organization has accessibility built into all phases of products, service, and/or activity development (60%) or accessibility is addressed upon request by disabled customers/people with disabilities (57%). Quality assurance testing prior to release to determine accessibility is done to a lesser extent (44%). [Q810]
 - IT managers are more likely than education or healthcare managers to report their organization has accessibility built into all phases of products, service, and/or activity development (69% vs 56% and 56%). This is not surprising given the attention that federal regulators have paid to the accessibility of products and services procured by educational systems in the last 15 years. While it further supports the need for education about this topic, it also shows the effectiveness of some of the mechanisms employed to influence the market to date.



- Around 3 in 5 managers report their organization has staff in website or digital content designers (63%) or accessibility specialist (56%) roles. Fewer say they have developers (47%) on staff. [Q1045]



- Among those who have developers on staff, managers estimate an average of 44% of their current staff of **developers** have sufficient accessibility skills to meet their organization’s goals. Similarly, among those who have website or digital content designers, managers estimate an average of 46% of their **website/digital content designers** have sufficient accessibility skills to meet their organization’s goals. [Q1005, Q1006]
 - There are a couple of things to take away from this. First, it highlights the need for professional development and education resources about accessibility principles and fundamentals, especially within IT focused offerings. Second, it demonstrates for students in these fields how having these skills can help them differentiate from competition for jobs.

III. Hiring and Retaining Employees with Accessibility Skills

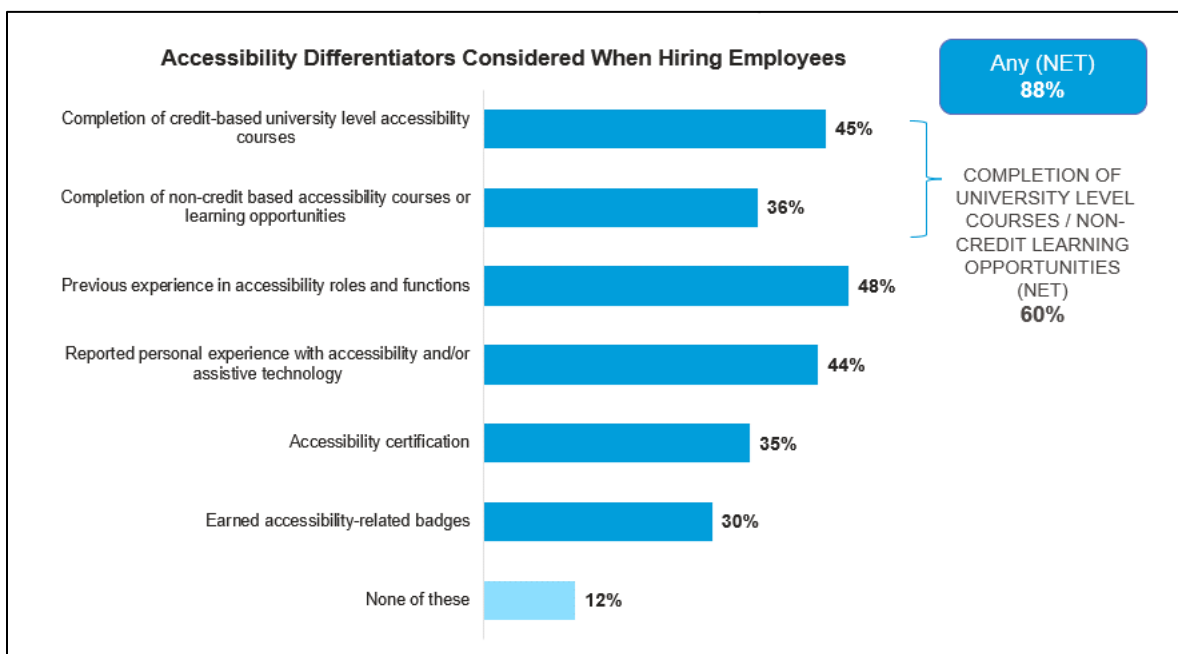
Managers report a variety of accessibility differentiators are considered when hiring employees, ranging from formal courses to previous experience. Specifically, the majority of managers report that job candidates are asked about their understanding and awareness of the needs of disabled customers/people with disabilities and/or their accessibility skills.

It is interesting to note that completion of credit-based university level courses on accessibility (45%) and completion of non-credit based accessibility courses or learning opportunities (36%) were considered more by hiring managers than accessibility certification (35%), but neither of those were considered as often as previous professional experience in the field (48%). This is likely because there are less opportunities to take and complete university level courses; however, it shows the importance of offering these types of courses.

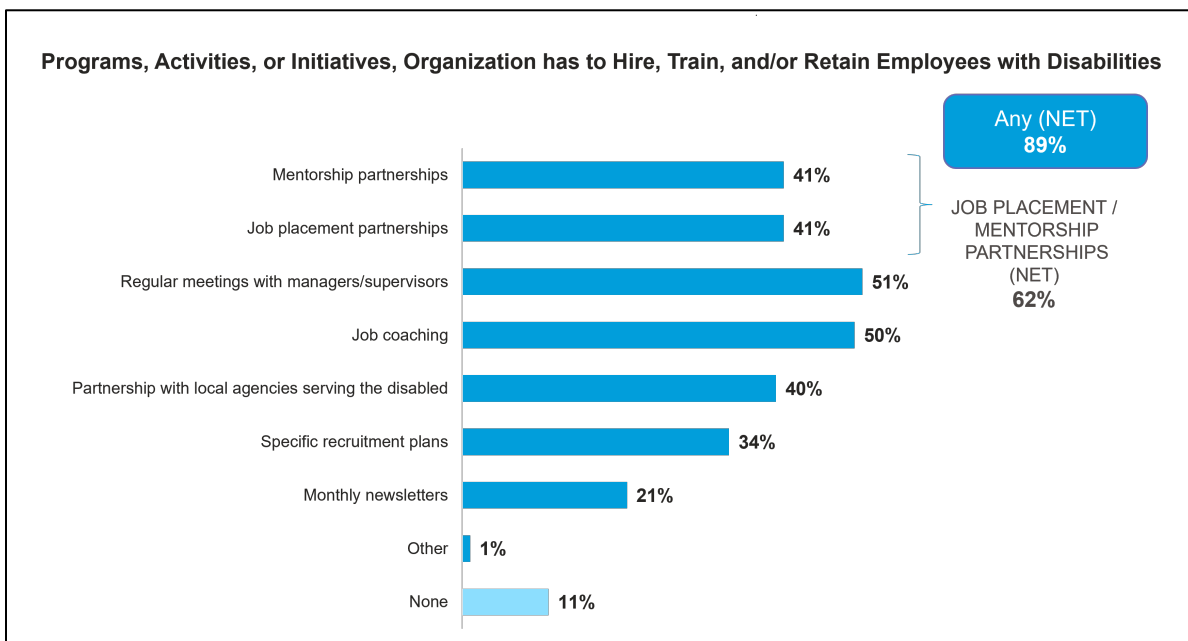
The commitment to accessibility extends to hiring those with accessibility skills. Among those who have them at their organization, many managers report it is important to their organizations to hire developers and website/digital content designers with accessibility skills, with many also reporting accessibility expertise and/or accessibility certification credentials as part of the standard job description for these two roles at their organization.

Still, even with this commitment to hiring employees with accessibility skills, some managers report it is difficult to retain staff with accessibility skills.

- Nearly 9 in 10 managers (88%) report their organization considers at least one of the listed accessibility differentiators when hiring employees, with a majority (60%) reporting completion of university level accessibility courses or learning opportunities (credit or non-credit based).
[Q1015]
 - IT managers are nearly twice as likely as education or healthcare managers to report their organization considers earned accessibility-related badges as differentiators (42% vs 23% and 24%).



- Nearly three-quarters of managers (72%) say that their organization's job candidates are asked about their understanding and awareness of the needs of disabled customers/people with disabilities and/or accessibility skills. [Q900/6]
 - Agreement with this is highest among managers in IT (77%) and lowest among those in education (66%).
- The vast majority of managers (89%) report their organization has programs, activities, or initiatives to hire, train, and/or retain employees with disabilities. More than 3 in 5 (62%) say their organization has mentorship partnerships or job placement partnerships to hire, train, and/or retain employees with disabilities. Additionally, about half of managers report having regular meetings with managers/supervisors (51%) or job coaching (50%) as other ways their organization hires, trains, and/or retains employees with disabilities. [Q905]
 - Large organizations – and to some extent medium organizations – are more likely than small organizations to have nearly all of the programs, activities, and initiatives in place.



- Among those organizations that currently have developers, the vast majority of managers (93%) report that it is at least somewhat important to their organization to hire **developers** with accessibility skills, yet only 15% find it *absolutely essential*. [Q1001]
- A similar proportion of managers that currently have website/digital content designers at their organization say it is at least somewhat important to hire **website/digital content designers** with accessibility skills (93%). However, similar to hiring developers with these skills, only 16% find hiring website/digital content designers with accessibility skills *absolutely essential*. [Q1002]
- More than 4 in 5 managers who currently have developers at their organization (86%) report that accessibility expertise and/or accessibility certification credentials is part of the standard job description for new positions for **developers** at their organization, with almost half (48%) saying that both expertise and certification credentials are part of it. [Q1010]
 - More than half of managers in IT who currently have developers at their organization (56%) say both expertise and accessibility certification credentials are part of the standard job description for new positions for developers.

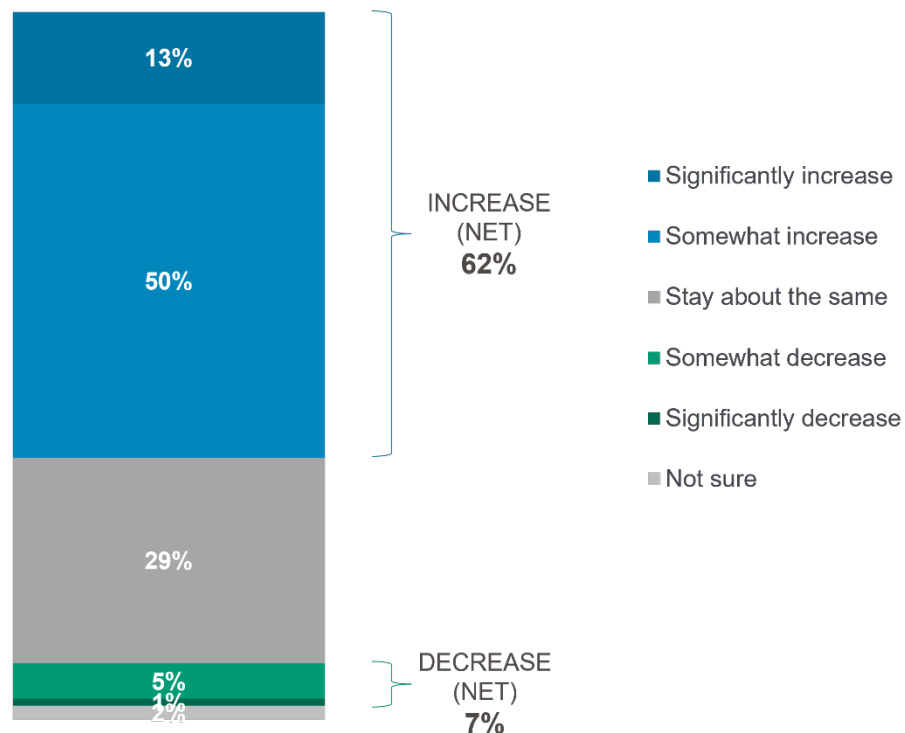
- Among managers who currently have website/digital content designers at their organization, a similar proportion (83%) report that accessibility expertise and/or accessibility certification credentials is part of the standard job description for new positions for **website/digital content designers**, with 44% saying both are part of the standard job description for new positions. [Q1011]
 - Those in healthcare (88%) or IT (88%) who currently have website/digital content designers at their organization are more likely than those in education (74%) to report that accessibility expertise and/or accessibility certification credentials is part of the standard job description for new positions.
- Although 1 in 5 managers (20%) say it is difficult to retain staff with accessibility skills once they are hired, more than twice as many say it is easy (42%). A similar proportion find it neither easy nor difficult (38%). [Q1040]
 - More than half of managers in IT (52%) say they find that retaining staff with accessibility skills is easy, while fewer managers in education (36%) and healthcare (39%) say the same.

IV. Demand for Accessibility Skills

The majority of managers have seen an increase in demand for employees with accessibility skills in the last five years and anticipate this trend will continue over the next 5 years.

- In the last five years, nearly 3 in 5 managers (59%) have seen an increase in demand for employees with accessibility skills in their organization, with 1 in 10 saying there has been a *significant increase* in demand (11%). [Q1020]
 - Large organizations are more likely than small and medium organizations to have seen an increase in demand (69% vs 45% and 55%).
 - Twice as many managers in IT report there has been a *significant increase* in demand compared to those in education or healthcare (16% vs 8% and 7%)
- Looking ahead, the majority of managers (62%) also anticipate an increase in demand for employees with accessibility skills in the next five years, with more than 1 in 10 anticipating a *significant increase* in demand (13%). [Q1035]
 - Notably, large and medium organizations are more likely than small organizations to anticipate an increase in demand over the next five years (68% and 68% vs 50%).

Organization Anticipation in Demand for Employees with Accessibility Skills to Change in their Organization over Next Five Years

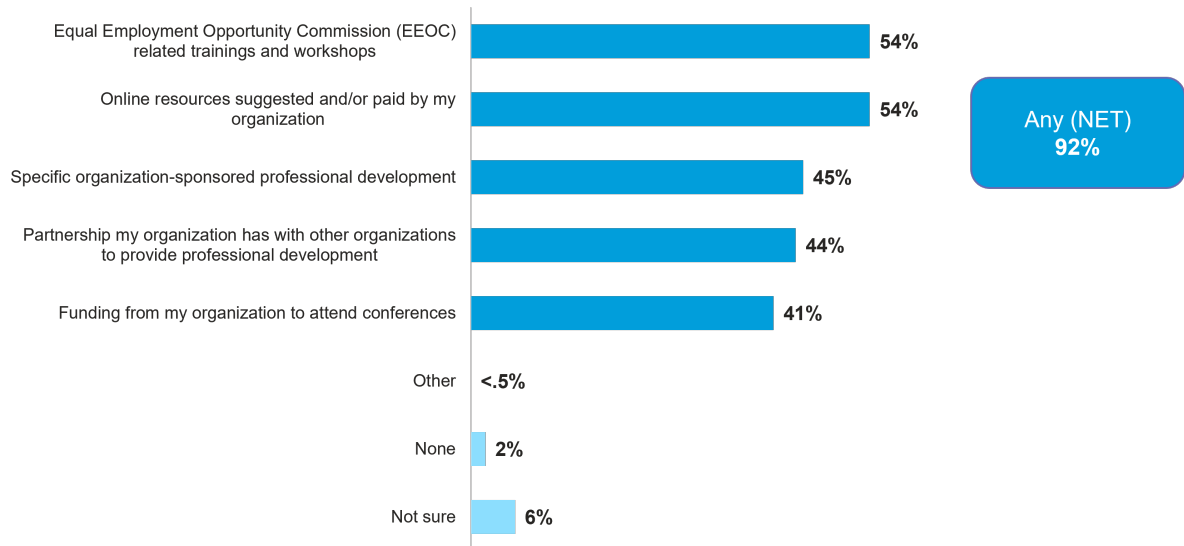


V. The Role of Accessibility in Managers' Professional Development

Most managers express that they are comfortable assessing their employees' accessibility skills and making the necessary recommendations to their employees. Perhaps this is because many managers report having specific professional development resources about accommodations and disability available to them.

- Most managers (88%) agree that they have sufficient resources to provide professional development for their employees, with more than a third (37%) *strongly agreeing* with this statement. [Q1105/1]
- And, the vast majority of managers understand what professional development their employees need to address accessibility skill development (90%) and are comfortable assessing their employees' accessibility skills (88%). [Q1105/2, 3]
- Managers are also comfortable making recommendations, with more than 9 in 10 saying they are comfortable recommending professional development resources that will be helpful for their employees (92%, including 47% who *strongly agree*) and they are comfortable recommending accessibility, accommodations, and disability resources to their employees (90%, including 38% who *strongly agree*). [Q1105/4, 5]
 - Those in IT are more likely than those in education to *strongly agree* that they are comfortable recommending professional development resources that will be helpful for their employees (53% vs 40%).
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) related work trainings and workshops (54%) and online resources suggested and/or paid by their organization (54%) are the most common professional development resources about accommodations and disability that managers say are available to them generally. [Q1100]
 - Managers in large and medium organizations are more likely than those in small organizations to report they have specific organization-sponsored professional development (53% and 51% vs 29%) and a partnership their organization has with other organizations to provide professional development (49% and 52% vs 31%).
 - Those in IT and education are more likely than those in healthcare to report that their organization has specific organization-sponsored professional development (52% and 50% vs 33%).

Professional Development Resources About Accommodations and Disability Available Generally



VI. The Role of Accessibility in Employees' Professional Development

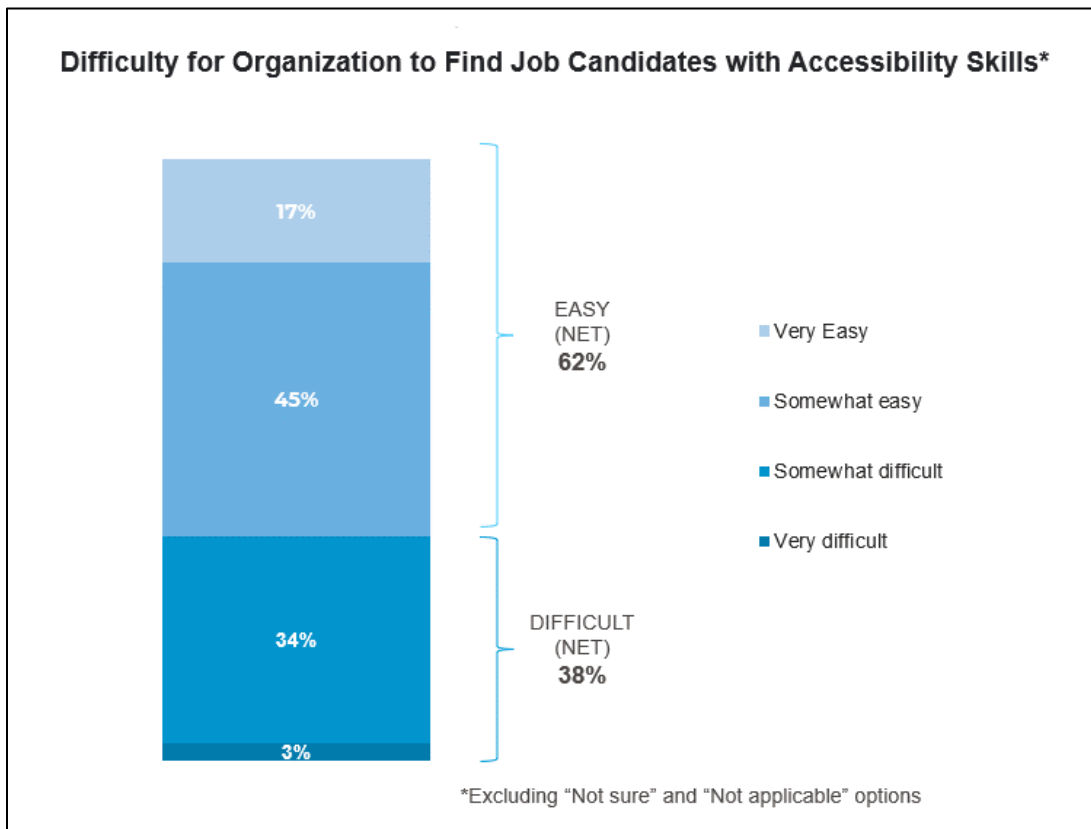
Most managers say their employees understand the need for professional development in general as well as development related to accessibility, accommodation, and disability. And, they report that their employees engage in professional development specifically related to accessibility, accommodations, and disability to improve their skills.

- Nearly all managers (96%) agree that their employees understand the need for professional development, with about half (51%) *strongly agreeing* with this sentiment. [Q1105/6]
- Further, close to 9 in 10 managers (89%) agree that their employees understand the need for professional development related to accessibility, accommodations, and disability, with 42% *strongly agreeing* with this statement. [Q1105/7]
 - Nearly half of managers in IT *strongly agree* with this statement (48%).
- While the overwhelming majority of managers agree that their employees engage in professional development to improve their skills (95%, including 46% who *strongly agree*), slightly fewer agree that their employees engage in professional development **specifically related to accessibility, accommodations, and disability** to improve their skills (87%, including 35% who *strongly agree*). [Q1105/8, 9]

VII. Accessibility Improvements for Organization

Even with the positive perceptions around accessibility and accommodations at their organizations, many managers still wish their organization would do more to accommodate employees with disabilities. Managers express a need for more professional development related to specific accessibility skills and/or topics for themselves and their employees.

- Many managers (41%) agree that employers don't take the needs of employees with disabilities as seriously as they should. [Q900/4]
- And, 7 in 10 managers (70%) wish their organization would do more to accommodate employees with disabilities. [Q900/1]
- Nearly 2 in 5 managers (38%) (excluding those who said "not sure" or "not applicable") report it's difficult for their organization to find job candidates with accessibility skills. [Q1025]
 - Managers in education and healthcare are more likely than those in IT to report it is difficult (44% and 44% vs 26%, respectively).



- Among those who say it is difficult finding job candidates with accessibility skills, the most common reasons are that candidates don't understand what accessibility skills are and candidates not having accessibility skills, with over half of managers saying either of these (53% each). Much fewer cite not knowing how to assess accessibility skills themselves as a reason (13%). [Q1030]
 - This indicates there is not enough available resources, education, or professional development for employees to gain this knowledge or expertise. Paired with the finding that most awareness, 48%, is related to previous professional experience, it can be inferred that previous experience may not offer a holistic understanding of disability or accessibility skills.
- Virtually all managers (95%) feel like they need professional development related to specific accessibility skills and/or topics. While there is no one area that the majority of managers say they need professional development related to specific accessibility skills and/or topics, the three most often cited are disability as part of diversity programs (32%), the use of assistive technology by persons with disabilities (31%), and general understanding of disability (30%). [Q1110]
- In line with this, a similar proportion of managers (94%) also feel like their employees need professional development related to specific accessibility skills and/or topics, with the three most often reported items mirroring what managers felt they needed themselves: general understanding of disability (34%), the use of assistive technology by persons with disabilities (31%), and disability as part of diversity programs (30%). [Q1115]

Accessibility Skills/Topics where Managers Feel They or Their Employees Need Professional Development

