



DANISH EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY DISABILITIES

Julia Salado-Rasmussen, PhD, Senior Associate Professor
Department of Social Work
University College Copenhagen (KP)
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The social problem

- Work gives access to one of the important social arenas in society, as well as income, independence, identity, and meaningfulness
- Decades of strategies and policies to promote equal employment opportunities and avoid discrimination against persons with disability
- Employment is high in Denmark, but persons with disabilities continue to have lower employment rates (60 % vs. 86 %).
- Employers play a crucial role in work inclusion, as they decide who to recruit and dismiss. But we know surprisingly little about how and why companies make different decisions regarding persons with disabilities.

Quantitative study The BEVICA project

The purpose is to examine employers' attitudes and behaviors towards recruiting persons with mobility disabilities.



Research Paper

Attitudes and behaviour of employers to recruiting persons with disabilities



Attitudes et comportement des employeurs à l'égard du recrutement de personnes en situation de handicap

Thomas Bredgaard^{a,*}, Julia Salado-Rasmussen^b

^a Department of Politics and Society, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

^b Department of Social Work, University College Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

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1. Introduction

Despite more than two decades of strategies and policies to promote equal employment opportunities and avoid discrimination against persons with disabilities, major employment and participation gaps still remain. Persons with disabilities have significantly lower employment rates, and higher inactivity and unemployment rates than persons without disabilities. If they do work, they are less likely to be in full-time employment and more likely to be in subsidised or supported employment. In terms of income, persons with disabilities have lower relative income levels and a higher likelihood of living in poverty (OECD, 2010; WHO, 2011; European Commission, 2017).

Employers are crucial in determining the position on the labour market of persons with disabilities. They decide how to post vacancies, whom to invite for interviews, which candidates to recruit and

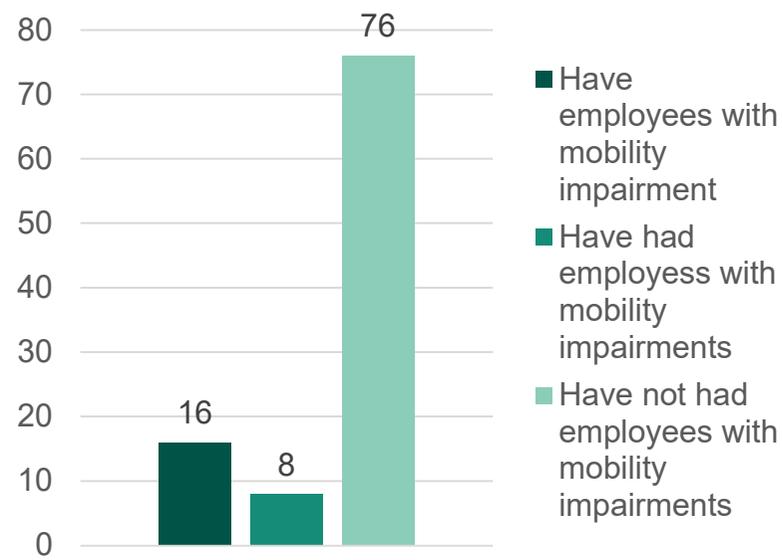
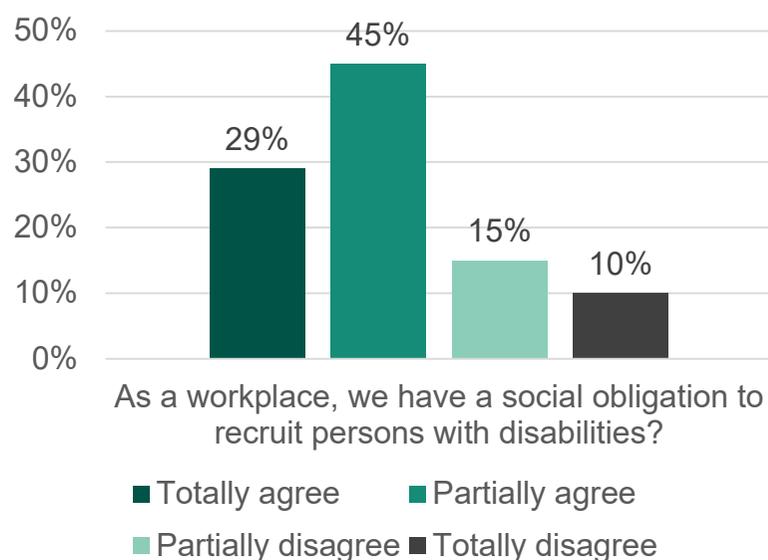
* Corresponding author at: Danish Research Centre for Disability and Employment (www.fhb.aau.dk), Aalborg University, Department of Politics and Society, Fibigerstræde 1, 9220 Aalborg, Denmark.
E-mail addresses: thomas@dps.aau.dk (T. Bredgaard), jusr@kp.dk (J. Salado-Rasmussen).

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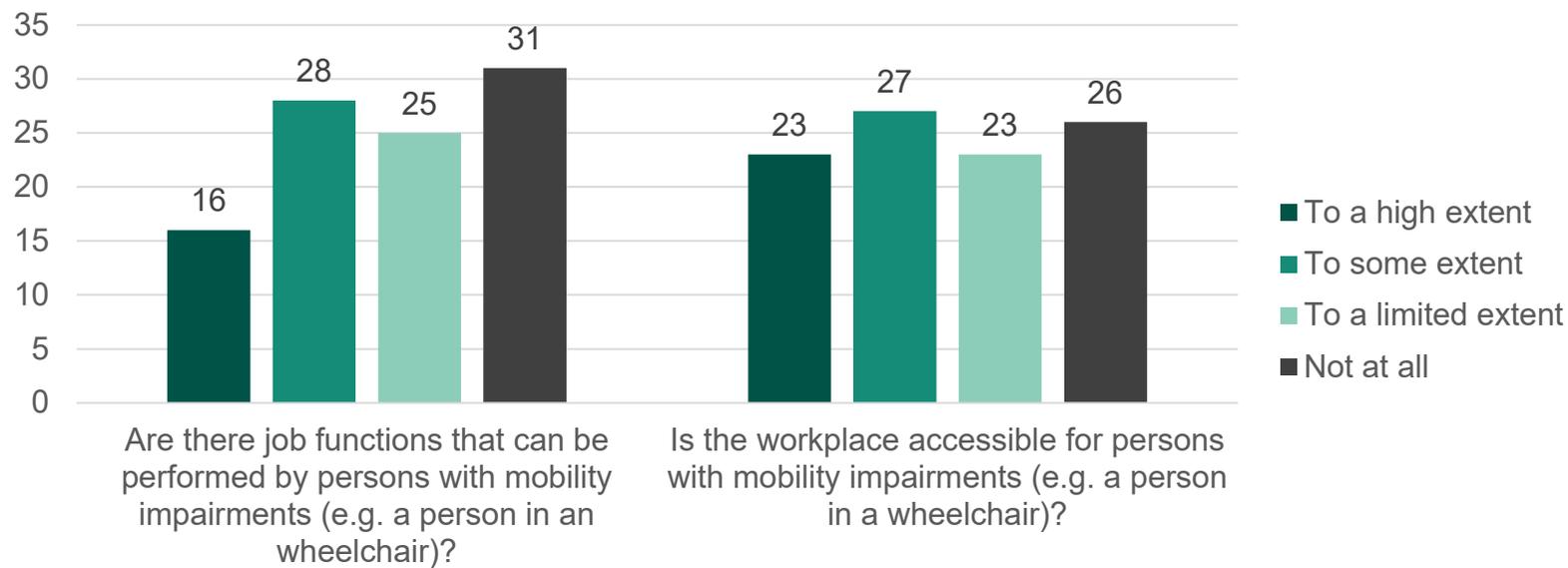
Survey data

- Representative survey of employers (public and private) and their attitudes, experiences, and behavior towards persons with mobility impairments.
- Collected by combining a web-based survey and telephone interviews.
- The data included 5,000 workplaces, and the response rate was 41% (N=1,901).
- At workplace level, the respondents were the managers responsible for making staff decisions (e.g. director or personnel manager).
- To ensure the sample was representative of Danish employers, we weighted the data by sector and number of employees.

Most Danish employers express positive attitudes, but only one quarter have experience with recruitment



About half of the workplaces lack job functions or are inaccessible to persons with mobility impairments



Four types of employers



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* Indicator of attitude: "As a workplace, we have a social obligation to hire persons with disabilities"? (agree=positive, disagree=negative)
** Indicator of behaviour: The workplace has - or have had - recruited employees with mobility impairments (yes=positive, no=negative)

Qualitative study The BEVICA project

The purpose is to examine employers' experiences with hiring and retention of people with mobility disabilities.

What motivates them, and what facilitates hiring and retention?

Arbejdsinklusion af personer med mobilitetshandicap fra et arbejdsgiverperspektiv

Julia Salado-Rasmussen & Stella Mia Sieling-Monas

Abstract

Når det kommer til integrationen af mennesker med mobilitetshandicap på arbejdsmarkedet, spiller arbejdsgiverne en afgørende rolle. Alligevel findes kun begrænset viden om arbejdsgivers rekrutteringspraksis og fastholdelse af målgruppen. Artiklen undersøger arbejdsgivers erfaringer med rekruttering og fastholdelse af medarbejdere med mobilitetshandicap og identificerer centrale faktorer, som påvirker arbejdsgivers beslutningsproces. Analysen er baseret på interviews med arbejdsgivere og ledere på 20 arbejdspladser, som har erfaringer med ansættelse og fastholdelse af målgruppen. Artiklen viser, hvordan forløbene forudsætter fleksibilitet og handlekraft fra både jobcenter, arbejdsgiver og medarbejder for at kunne imødekomme de individuelle behov i de konkrete ansættelser. Medarbejdernes åbenhed om funktionsnedsættelser er afgørende i arbejdsgivers perspektiv, men sætter samtidig medarbejderne i en sårbar position. Artiklen peger afslutningsvis på et stærkt behov for viden om muligheder og kompensationsordninger, når ansættelsesforhold skal lykkes.

Keywords: mobilitetshandicap, arbejdsgiver, rekruttering, fastholdelse, disclosure, ableism, arbejdsinklusion

Indledning

Både politisk og forskningsmæssigt fremhæves arbejdsmarkedet som et af de afgørende fællesskaber i samfundet. At arbejde giver den enkelte mulighed for selvforsørgelse, samvær med andre, opbygningen af arbejdsidentitet og meningsfuldhed. Arbejdsmarkedet og beskæftigelse ses også i stigende grad som en vej til at sikre inklusion af udsatte grupper på arbejdsmarkedet (Bonfils et al., 2020; Salado-Rasmussen et al., 2020; Frøylund & Spjelkavik, 2014).

Beskæftigelsen i Danmark er historisk høj. Trods dette er arbejdsmarkedsdeltagelsen stadig væsentlig lavere for personer med

handicap end for personer uden. Beskæftigelsesgraden for de to grupper ligger på henholdsvis 60 procent og 86 procent (Larsen et al., 2023). VIVE estimerer, at der i Danmark findes ca. 30.000 ledige med handicap, som søger arbejde og kan påtage sig et job inden for 2 uger. Dermed har målgruppen et ganske stort beskæftigelsespotentiale (Larsen et al., 2023).

I lighed med andre europæiske lande giver mangel på arbejdskraft i Danmark i disse år virksomhederne vanskeligheder med at besætte ledige stillinger. At øge beskæftigelsesgraden for personer med funktionsnedsættelser, psykiske lidelser eller sociale udfordringer kan

Interviews with employers

- 20 Danish workplaces, each with one or more employees with mobility disabilities (best case design)
- Geographically distributed across Zealand, Funen, and Jutland
- Private and public, large and small workplaces
- Various industries
- Employees hired and retained
- Employees in ordinary employment and flex jobs (a Danish subsidized employment scheme for people with reduced work capacity)
- Disability caused by a progressive disease (e.g., arthritis) or by congenital malformations or amputations.

Motivation

Personal history: Relationship with a person with a disability or personal experiences

Social responsibility: Desire to take social responsibility, preferably locally

Business model: Factors related to the workplace or the nature of the work

External initiative: Hiring decisions are strongly motivated by a third party



Facilitator for hiring and retention

- **Flexibility** among the employer, employee, and job center
- **Agency** to implement and continuously adapt employment and retention measures
- **Knowledge** of disability or illness and of relevant support and compensation schemes
- **Openness** about disability or illness.

“But she knows that she can come at any time and say, ‘I can feel that I need to take care of myself now, can I have an extra day off tomorrow?’ Then she gets an extra day off tomorrow. Quite often, it is themselves who pay for it with time off or a vacation day. (...) She does not want it to get out that her staff says, “Well, [name] is so often sick.” They know she has the illness. We respect her, her work, and her professional skills. She has been here for many years. So I think we give something and she gives something.”

When it gets hard...

- Financial constraints and daily work planning can limit employers' opportunities for hiring and retention
- The assumption of the 'able body' often underlies how work is organized
- Risk of avoidance behavior (aversive disablism) due to fear of potential conflicts if a disability worsens.

“So one thing is the issue with (the disability, ed.), and there is also an economic aspect to it. I mean, we had to assign a substitute all the time. So there is something financial, something related to planning, and then there is also the aspect regarding the group of citizens we work with. And the colleagues, so I think there are many considerations (...) But right in the situation, as employers, we need to dare to take this responsibility and say that this is not working. And say, in other words, put the cards on the table. We should not be afraid to address it.”

Key factors supporting employment and retention from an employer perspective

	Employee	Employer	Job Centre
Knowledge	Knowledge of own illness/disability and work capacity	Knowledge of disability/illness and support or compensation schemes	Knowledge of support and compensation schemes, disability/illness, and possibilities for workplace adjustments
Flexibility	Flexibility regarding salary, holidays, and work tasks	Flexibility in job functions, tasks, and work planning	Flexibility regarding financial framework, duration, and type of employment
Openness	Openness about health, illness trajectory, and work capacity	Openness about workplace adjustments	Open and trustworthy communication about the employee and workplace
Agency	Managing illness/disability and realistic understanding of work capacity	Promoting hiring internally and aligning tasks and conditions with the job center and employee	Active matching and continuous support for employers and employees

Summary

- The majority of Danish employers state that they “have a social obligation to recruit people with disabilities” (75%).
- While only a smaller proportion of employers have or have had employees with a mobility impairment (23%)
- Potential to involve more employers, especially the passive employers (54%)
- Motivation is influenced by personal experiences, social responsibility, business considerations, and external initiatives from job centres and other actors.
- Successful employment and retention depend on knowledge, flexibility, openness, and agency among job centres, employers, and employees.
- More proactive job centre outreach could strengthen work inclusion (e.g., job development, Supported Employment, Individual Placement and Support (IPS)).



Thank you for listening!

Julia Salado-Rasmussen

University College Copenhagen (KP)

jusr@kp.dk

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