

Working for Change 2018

Workplace experiences

Survey results

Introduction

Action on Hearing loss wanted to uncover the experiences of people with hearing loss in the workplace. This report outlines the key findings from the survey, along with the topline data. The survey included questions on retirement, applying for jobs, experiences when in work, and about the Access to Work scheme.

When 'hearing loss' is mentioned, this is referring to respondents who are either deaf, deafened and hard of hearing throughout.

Methodology

Action on Hearing Loss conducted a survey of 1072 people with hearing loss aged 16 or above across the United Kingdom. The survey was conducted online between 20 November – 29 December 2017.

Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding or multiple answers. Base sizes for each question differ as respondents will have chosen not to answer every question or would have been filtered out of the question. See each question for the base description and size.

Key findings

Retirement

- Hearing loss was a factor in the decision to retire early for over half (56%) of respondents.
- Of those respondents who retired early because of hearing loss:
 - Nearly three-quarters (72%) did so because they found hearing loss made work stressful.
 - A fifth (20%) did not feel that their employer made reasonable adjustments for their hearing loss.

Applying for work

- Of those who have told employers about their hearing loss at recruitment stage, over two-fifths (43%) felt they had never or hardly ever received reasonable adjustments.
- Nearly half (44%) of respondents have applied for a job and not disclosed their hearing loss. The following are some of the reasons for non-disclosure:
 - Over half (51%) of respondents have been concerned that the employer would think they wouldn't be competent at the job.
 - Nearly one in five (17%) thought they would be treated unfairly at work

Experiences in work

- Over half (54%) of respondents have worked at some time without disclosing their hearing loss. Of these respondents:
 - Nearly a fifth (18%) didn't want to disclose their hearing loss for fear of losing their job.
 - A third (33%) thought they would be treated unfairly at work if they disclosed their hearing loss
 - Two in five (42%) thought that reasonable adjustments wouldn't be able to be made and therefore there was no point telling people at work.

- Over half (55%) have felt unfairly treated at work because of their hearing loss.
- One in three (35%) have felt bullied at work because of their hearing loss.
- Nearly a fifth (18%) of respondents have had an employer who has implied or suggested that they would be better off not continuing to work.
- Two-thirds (65%) have felt isolated at work because of their hearing loss.
- Eight in 10 (79%) have felt stressed at work because of their hearing loss.
- Nearly eight in 10 (78%) said their hearing loss has negatively impacted social interactions with colleagues at work.

Access to Work

Access to work is a government-funded grant (money you don't have to pay back) that could pay for practical support so people with disabilities can start or stay in work. For more information, visit [our website](#).

- Over a third (36%) of our survey respondents in work or looking for work have not heard of the Access to Work scheme.
- Only (26%) of those who have heard of Access to Work are accessing the scheme.

Topline data

1. Which of the following statements apply to you?

	%
I am Deaf/deaf	28
I have hearing loss	73
I use British Sign Language (BSL)	5
I have tinnitus	41
I am Deafblind	0.38
Other (please explain)	6

Base: All respondents who answered the question (1066)

2. How old are you?

	%
16-24	2
25-44	19
45-54	23
55-64	25
65-74	22
75-84	8
85+	1

Base: All respondents who answered the question (1069)

3. Where do you live?

	%
East Midlands	7
East of England	8
London	8
Northern Ireland	2
North East England	6
North West England	11
Scotland	7
South East England	17
South West England	12
Wales	4
West Midlands	9
Yorkshire and The Humber	7
Other (please explain)	3

4. Are you male or female?

	%
Male	34
Female	66
Prefer not to say	0.47
Prefer to describe myself (please explain)	0.37

Base: All respondents who answered the question (1069)

5. Which of the following best describes your current situation?

	%
I am a student	1
I am an apprentice/on a paid internship	0.09
I am in paid employment	48
I am in unpaid employment (e.g. volunteering, charity work, an unpaid internship)	4
I am not in employment and I am not looking for work	2
I am not in employment but I am looking for work	4
I am retired	31
I am self-employed	5
Other (please explain)	5

Base: All respondents who answered the question (1066)

6. Did you retire early?

	%
Yes	60
No	40

Base: Those who are retired (333)

7. Was your early retirement related to your deafness/hearing loss in any way?

	%
Yes, partly	41
Yes, fully	15
Not related	44

Base: Those who retired early (202)

8. Which of the following reasons (if any) were why you retired early?

	%
I couldn't communicate well with people at work because of my deafness/hearing loss	50
I did not feel that my employer made reasonable adjustments for my deafness/hearing loss	20
I found having deafness/hearing loss made work stressful	72
I found it difficult to undertake tasks I had been able to do previously because of my deafness/hearing loss	54
I felt I was treated unfairly at work, because of my deafness/hearing loss	19
Don't know	0
Other (please explain)	23

Base: Those who retired early (116)

9. If you were previously employed, how long ago did you leave employment?

	%
0-2 years ago	19
3- 7 years ago	27
Longer than 7 years ago	49
Not applicable	4
Don't know	1

Base: Those who are not in employment (406)

10. Have you ever applied for a job and told the employer during the recruitment process about your deafness/hearing loss?

	%
Yes	54
No	44

Don't know	2
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Base: Those who have worked in the last 7 years¹ (858)

11. Were reasonable adjustments made for you during the recruitment process(es)?

	%
Always	13
Sometimes	34
Hardly ever	19
Never	24
Don't know	11

Base: Those who have worked in the last 7 years and have disclosed their hearing loss at recruitment stage (467)

12. Have you ever applied for a job and not told the employer during the recruitment process about your deafness/hearing loss?

	%
Yes	44
No	53
Don't know	3

Base: Those who have worked in the last 7 years (854)

13. Which of the following reasons (if any) are why you did not tell the employer during recruitment stage about your deafness/hearing loss?

	%
I thought they would think I wouldn't be competent at my job	51
I thought I would be treated unfairly at work	17
I thought they would not be able to make reasonable adjustments for me and so there was no point telling them	20
I didn't think the employer knowing about my deafness/hearing loss was relevant to the role	40
Don't know	5
Other (please explain)	18

Base: Those who have worked in the last 7 years and have not disclosed their hearing loss at recruitment stage (368)

¹ We wanted to explore respondents' recent experiences in work under the new Equality Act, which came into force in 2010.

14. Have you ever put off telling people at work about your deafness/hearing loss?

	%
Yes	54
No	45
Don't know	2

Base: Those who have worked in the last 7 years (852)

15. Who at work have you ever put off telling about your deafness/hearing loss?

	%
Manager(s)	62
Colleagues	87
Other (please explain)	21

Base: Those who have worked in the last 7 years and have put off telling people at work about their hearing loss (453)

16. Which of the following reasons (if any) are why you put off telling people about your deafness/hearing loss?

	%
I thought they would think I wasn't competent at my job	60
I thought I would lose my job	18
I thought I would be treated unfairly at work	33
I thought they would not be able to make reasonable adjustments for me and so there was no point telling them	42
Don't know	5
Other (please explain)	30

Base: Those who have worked in the last 7 years and have put off telling people at work about their hearing loss (443)

17. Have you personally ever felt you were treated unfairly at work because of your deafness/hearing loss? (821)

	%
Yes	55
No	38
Don't know	7

Base: Those who have worked in the last 7 years (821)

18. The following statements are some examples of being treated unfairly at work. Thinking about your whole career, please say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree or disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Don't know (%)	Base (Those who have worked in the last 7 years)
I have not had the same opportunities for promotion as other colleagues	36	25	35	5	805
I have felt bullied at work because of my deafness/hearing loss	35	15	47	2	803
Colleagues have teased, mocked or made jokes about my deafness/hearing loss	51	11	35	3	809
Colleagues have acted as if they think I'm not smart	41	15	42	2	805
Colleagues haven't communicated effectively with me	71	11	17	1	802
My employers haven't made reasonable adjustments for me at work	47	23	28	2	811
An employer has implied or suggested that I would be better off not continuing to work	18	14	64	4	805
I have felt pressured into reducing my working hours	12	15	69	4	799
I have not been treated unfairly at work	34	23	39	3	792

19. Below are statements of experiences that can arise at work. Have you ever experienced any of the following at work?

	%
I have felt isolated at work because of my deafness/hearing loss	65
I have felt lonely at work because of my deafness/hearing loss	47
I have felt stressed at work because of my deafness/hearing loss	79
I have experienced none of these	11

Base: Those who are worked in the last 7 years (794)

20. Which areas of your working life (if any) do you feel have ever been negatively affected by deafness/hearing loss?

	%
Career opportunities (e.g. not being able to apply to the jobs you want)	46
The ability to access learning and training opportunities	38
Social interactions with colleagues at work	78
Socialising with colleagues outside working hours	65
Other (please explain)	21

Base: Those who are worked in the last 7 years (765)

21. Are you aware of the Access to Work scheme?

	%
Yes	64
No	36

Base: Those in work or looking for work (607)

22. Below are a number of statements about Access to Work. For each one, please select whether you think it's true or false.

	True (%)	False (%)	Base (Those in work or looking for work and are aware of Access to Work)
Access to Work is funded by the UK government (true)*	90	10	369
Access to Work is charity funded support (false)	18	82	356
Access to Work can pay for equipment needed for work (true)	95	5	372
Access to Work can pay for communication support at interviews (true)	84	16	369
Access to Work can pay for communication support at work (true)	90	10	370
Access to Work can pay for travel to and from work (true)	35	65	364
Access to Work can pay for refreshments (false)	1	99	362
Access to Work can help if you're doing unpaid work (false)	44	56	360
I don't know anything about the Access to Work scheme	11	89	335

*It is noted after each statement whether it is true or false in reality.

23. Do you currently use the Access to Work scheme to support you with adjustments at work?

	%
Yes	26
No	72
Don't know	2

Base: Those in work or looking for work and are aware of Access to Work (382)

Further information

For further information regarding our Working for Change campaign, please see [our website](#): or contact campaigns@hearingloss.org.uk