

Discrimination

Key facts from the Life Opportunities Survey interim results, 2009/10

The Life Opportunities Survey (LOS) is a new large scale longitudinal survey of disability in Great Britain. Interim results from the first year of the two year baseline survey were published on the 9th December 2010(1) and the information below presents some of the key facts from this report. In addition to these results, presented in boxes are some of the findings from the qualitative research that was commissioned to complement the statistics provided by the LOS(1).

The information below explores the types of discrimination experienced by adults(2). Discrimination occurs when a particular person or group are treated less favourably because of their personal characteristics(3).

Taken together, a health condition, illness or impairment, or disability was among the two most common reasons given for discrimination. This was reported by one in twenty adults (5 per cent). Age was also identified as a reason for discrimination by one in twenty adults (5 per cent).

People identified as being responsible for health or disability related discrimination

- Nearly a third (30 per cent) of adults who specified discrimination due to a health condition, illness or impairment, or disability, identified health staff as being responsible. Employers and strangers in the street were both identified by a quarter (26 per cent and 25 per cent respectively) of adults.

Workplace discrimination experienced

- Among employed adults who had experienced some form of health or disability related discrimination, over two-fifths (44 per cent) reported they experienced discrimination in the workplace. Of these adults, a fifth (19 per cent) identified being given fewer responsibilities than wanted as the type of workplace discrimination they experienced.

1 See <http://www.odi.gov.uk/disability-statistics-and-research/life-opportunities-survey.php> for more information.

2 Results presented are from adults (those aged 16 and over) who were interviewed as part of the LOS between June 2009 and March 2010.

3 Aside from disability discrimination, LOS also includes findings on discrimination in relation to age, gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.

- The second most frequently stated type of workplace discrimination identified was not being promoted, which was reported by over a tenth (13 per cent) of all employed adults who had experienced workplace discrimination.

The qualitative research provided examples of possible workplace discrimination. One participant with impairments explained that, because her impairment was not immediately apparent, her colleagues did not recognise it and did not believe she required the assistance she had requested. Other participants with impairments were unwilling to disclose their impairments when applying for a new job, as they feared they would not be offered the position, and then found it difficult to request assistance after they started. According to the authors of the qualitative research report, 'lingering doubts persisted over whether an employer would really hire a disabled person ahead of a non-disabled candidate.'

"I wrote on my applications that I had ..., so I think maybe employers thought, oh, he's going to have a hard time, so maybe I didn't get as many interviews as I could have if I hadn't mentioned it."