



# Enabling Ability:

Meeting the employment requirements of  
people with disabilities in the Public Service

**State Services Commission  
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## Introduction

The State Services Commissioner has a responsibility to “promote, develop, and monitor equal employment opportunities policies and programmes for the Public Service” under section 6 of the State Sector Act (1988). This report, *Enabling Ability: Meeting the Employment Requirements of People with Disabilities in the Public Service* contributes to fulfilling these responsibilities.

Public Service chief executives also have equal employment opportunities (EEO) responsibilities under the State Sector Act (1988). In addition to operating an equal employment opportunities programme to identify and eliminate barriers that cause or perpetuate inequality in employment, chief executives must recognise the employment requirements of people with disabilities.

The purpose of this report is to provide information and develop an indicative profile of public servants with disabilities. This report will assist departments in developing good practice, by providing practical examples of initiatives that support people with disabilities in employment in the Public Service.

Chapter One defines disability and provides information on sources of disability data. This chapter also discusses the State Services Commission (SSC) review of disability data collection in the Public Service.

Chapter Two develops a profile of public servants with disabilities, and explores the employment trends of this workforce. This chapter draws on information and data from the SSC Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005, and the Statistics New Zealand (Statistics NZ) 2006 Disability Survey.

Chapter Three explores the ways in which Public Service departments are identifying and meeting the employment requirements of people with disabilities, and reports the findings of qualitative interviews with departments conducted by the SSC in 2008.

Chapter Four provides examples of initiatives that are supporting and meeting the employment requirements of people with disabilities across the sector and within Public Service departments.

Appendix One highlights issues for consideration when collecting and using data and information on people with disabilities.

## Chapter One: Defining Disability

### ***What is 'disability'?***

There are various definitions of disability. The New Zealand Disability Strategy describes disability as:

“Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments... Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have...”<sup>1</sup>

Statistics NZ defines disability as “any self-perceived limitation in activity resulting from a long-term condition or health problem; lasting longer or expected to last longer than six months or more and not completely eliminated by an assistive device”.<sup>2</sup> Statistics NZ also draws on the World Health Organisation’s functional definition of disability of “...any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner of within the range considered normal for a human being”.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of this report, the Statistics NZ definition of disability will apply.

There is also a variety of terminology used to describe the group of people who have impairments, or experience disabilities. This report refers to ‘people with disabilities’ as this is the wording of the *Equality and Diversity: New Zealand Public Service Equal Employment Opportunities Policy*.

The perception of whether a disability exists remains that of the staff member concerned – individuals choose to self-identify as having a disability.

There are five categories of disability:

- Sensory
  - Hearing (people with a hearing disability have difficulty hearing or cannot hear in a conversation with one other person and/or hold a conversation with at least three other people)
  - Seeing (people with a seeing disability have difficulty seeing or cannot see ordinary newsprint and/or the face of someone from across the room, even when wearing corrective lenses)

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<sup>1</sup> Minister for Disability Issues (2001). *New Zealand Disability Strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health

<sup>2</sup> Statistics New Zealand. *Information about the Household Disability Survey 2006*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

- Physical
  - Mobility (people with a mobility disability have difficulty with or cannot walk distances, walk up or down a flight of stairs, carry objects, move from room to room or stand for long periods)
  - Agility (people with an agility disability have difficulty with or are unable to bend, dress, grasp, reach, cut their own toe-nails, cut their own food, get themselves in or out of bed)
- Intellectual
  - People with an intellectual disability need support from organisations like IHC or People First, or have been to a special school or have received a special education because of an intellectual impairment
- Psychiatric / Psychological
  - This includes people who, because of long-term emotional, psychological or psychiatric condition, have difficulty with or are unable to communicate, socialise or participate in everyday activities that people their age can usually do
- Other
  - People with 'other' disabilities have long-term conditions or health problems that cause ongoing difficulty with their ability to learn or remember, or cause difficulty with or stop them participating in everyday activities that other people their age can normally do, including difficulty speaking or being understood (where the disability is not classified as physical, sensory, intellectual or psychiatric/psychological).

### ***Disability data***

Information on people with disabilities is collected by a variety of organisations. Data and information relating to people with disabilities employed in the Public Service is collected and analysed by Statistics NZ, the SSC and Public Service departments. This section outlines the disability data and information sources used in the preparation of this report, and also summarises the results of a review of disability data collected by the SSC undertaken in 2005.

### **Statistics NZ – 2006 Disability Survey**

Statistics NZ conducts the Disability Survey every five years. The Disability Survey collects statistics on the prevalence, nature, duration and cause of disability for children and adults living in households and for adults living in residential facilities. For adults over 15 years of age, the survey collects further information on services and assistance received or needed, special equipment used or needed and barriers encountered in everyday life in the areas of employment, education, transport and accommodation.

In the Disability Survey, disability status is determined by responses to a series of questions that assessed difficulties performing certain day-to day activities. Respondents self-identify their ability to perform these activities.

In the 2006 Disability Survey, Statistics NZ used the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC 2006) to identify and group together categories of industries in which people are employed. There is no core 'Public Service' industry group, so a Public Service proxy group has been identified that broadly (but not exactly) represents the New Zealand Public Service. The Public Service proxy group includes industry classifications of Central Government Administration, Justice, Correctional and Detention Services, and Regulatory Services.

This report draws on information from the 2006 Disability Survey on adults with disabilities living in households, who are employed in the Public Service proxy group (as described above). Much of the information used in this report was specifically generated from the 2006 Disability Survey for the SSC, and is not publicly available. Information from the 2006 Disability Survey is available from the Statistics NZ website: [www.stats.govt.nz/people/health/disabilities.htm](http://www.stats.govt.nz/people/health/disabilities.htm).

## **State Services Commission - Career Progression and Development Survey**

The SSC conducted a Career Progression and Development Survey (CPDS) for the Public Service in 2000 and 2005. The purpose of the survey was to explore public servants' perceptions of the Public Service work environment and career progression opportunities, and asked respondents to identify their disability status. In 2005, the 5,000 respondents were broadly representative of the Public Service population, including people with disabilities. This report will draw on data from the 2005 CPDS to profile people with disabilities in the Public Service. For more information on the 2005 CPDS, visit: [www.ssc.govt.nz/career-progression-survey05](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/career-progression-survey05).

## **State Services Commission – Human Resource Capability Survey and Disability Data Review**

The SSC started collecting data on disability as part of the Human Resource Capability (HRC) survey and its precursor in the early 1990s. The purpose of collecting disability data was to provide an accurate count of the number of people with disabilities in the Public Service in order to examine employment trends and analyse variables such as age, gender and ethnicity profiles. In 2005, an independent review identified a range of factors affecting the accuracy of the disability data being collected in the annual HRC survey and issues for ongoing collection and use of disability data.

The disability data review highlighted:

- disability data gathered in the Public Service was not comparable to Statistics NZ's Disability Survey data

- information collected by departments on disability was based on staff self-identifying that a) they have a disability and b) the type of disability. This differed to Statistics NZ's more normative method of determining disability status, and contributed to inconsistencies between SSC data and Statistics NZ data in the years preceding the disability data review
- some people were reluctant to disclose their disability status to their employer for a number of reasons, including perception that disclosure might disadvantage them in some way, that it was not relevant to their work, uncertainty about how the information would be used, and uncertainty about who would have access to it
- disability data was often collected at commencement of employment and was not regularly updated
- most departments wanted disability information to understand how disability affects a person's work, and what accommodations were required. This information was often not gained from disability data collected solely for statistical purposes.

Following the review and consideration of a number of options, the SSC decided not to collect disability data for statistical purposes from departments in the annual HRC survey from 2006 onwards. The SSC now draws on statistical data from Statistics NZ.

## **Disability information collected by departments**

Data and information on staff with disabilities may be collected by departments for statistical purposes (e.g. reporting against the New Zealand Disability Strategy or for workforce profiling), or for understanding and addressing the employment requirements of particular individuals (e.g. identifying workplace accommodations required by specific individuals). However, often departments ask one or two questions covering both purposes, and these questions may elicit responses that don't meet the information requirements. For example, asking if a person has a disability will not provide information on what accommodations they may require in the workplace.

Many Public Service departments collect EEO data on staff, and frequently this includes specific health or disability status information. The qualitative interviews conducted by SSC in preparing this report (discussed in Chapter Three) highlighted that this information is usually gathered during the application for employment process, or on appointment.

Often the purpose for collecting disability information is not made clear to the person completing the forms. Only a few departments specifically mention of the purpose of data collection (whether for statistical purposes or for understanding the employment requirements of staff) and few specifically mention privacy and use of information. Some departments state they use this data for 'reporting purposes'. This could be for a range of reporting requirements, such as internal monitoring of progress for people with disabilities, or for reporting progress against the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

In line with the findings of the disability data review in 2005, several departments also questioned the validity of data they collected.

Many departments that participated in the qualitative interviews were interested in ways to encourage staff to disclose their disability information. People with disabilities are sometimes reticent with information due to fear of discrimination, belief that their disability is not relevant to their work, not self-identifying as having a disability, or concern about who will use the information (and for what purpose).

Some strategies used by departments for encouraging disclosure include:

- having a clear statement on the purpose of collecting the information, and how it will be used
- having a clear statement on who has access to the information, and for what purpose
- using a preceding statement that encourages people with disabilities to disclose information (linked to purpose for collection and intended use of the information)
- not collecting disability data on application forms or, if gathering this information at the time of application, clearly explaining that this information is for statistical purposes (such as recruitment advertising analysis) and will not be used in short-listing or appointment decisions
- placing the disability questions in a prominent area on a form (for example, having disability questions immediately following bank account information on new employee forms)
- providing training for managers and human resources staff on understanding why and how to collect disability data
- working through the EEO / disability data collection forms in person (one-on-one) with new staff members as part of the induction process, enabling any questions or concerns to be answered immediately.

Maintaining disability data is another issue for departments. Data is often collected at application or commencement of employment, and is not regularly updated. As disability status can change over time, this does not capture information on people who develop an impairment or health condition during their employment.

In summary, the collection of data information on people with disabilities employed in the Public Service is carried out by a number of agencies, including Statistics NZ, the SSC and individual departments. While the collection of data and information on people with disabilities is sometimes difficult, it is important that departments are able to identify staff with disabilities and to identify the employment requirements of staff with disabilities. Appendix One considers when and how departments can collect information on people with disabilities.

## Chapter Two: People with Disabilities in the Public Service

This chapter profiles people with disabilities employed in the Public Service. It draws on data and information from the SSC's 2005 CPDS and Statistics NZ's 2006 Disability Survey. This chapter also draws on information collected in the qualitative interviews undertaken by SSC (described in more detail in Chapter Three).

### **Representation**

The Statistics NZ 2006 Disability Survey indicates that 10.4% of the Public Service proxy group workforce has a disability, compared with 11.2% of the total employed labour force.<sup>4</sup> This equates to approximately 4,610 people with disabilities in the Public Service.<sup>5</sup> However, taking sampling error into account, the actual number of people with disabilities in the Public Service could range from 3,000 to 6,200.

The 2005 CPDS found that 8% of the Public Service workforce identified as having a disability. This equates to approximately 3,550 people.<sup>6</sup> Taking sampling error into account, the actual number of people with disabilities in the Public Service could range from 2,900 to 4,170.

The disability data section in Chapter One discusses some of the difficulties in collecting accurate information on people with disabilities, and outlines some of the factors affecting the validity of disability data and discrepancies between the SSC data and Statistics NZ data. Self-reporting of disability status may provide a lower count than normative methods used by Statistics NZ, where disability status is assigned on the basis of certain criteria.

The majority of respondents who self-identified as having a disability in the 2005 CPDS indicated that their disability was physical, with sensory-related being the next most reported type of disability.<sup>7</sup> This is line with findings from the 2006 Disability Survey, where the physical and sensory disabilities were the most reported types of disability for adults.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2007). *2006 Disability Survey*

<sup>5</sup> As at 30 June 2007, there were 44,335 people employed in Public Service departments. State Services Commission (2007). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005*

<sup>6</sup> State Services Commission (2006). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005* and State Services Commission (2007). *Human Resource Capability Survey*

<sup>7</sup> State Services Commission. (2006). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005*

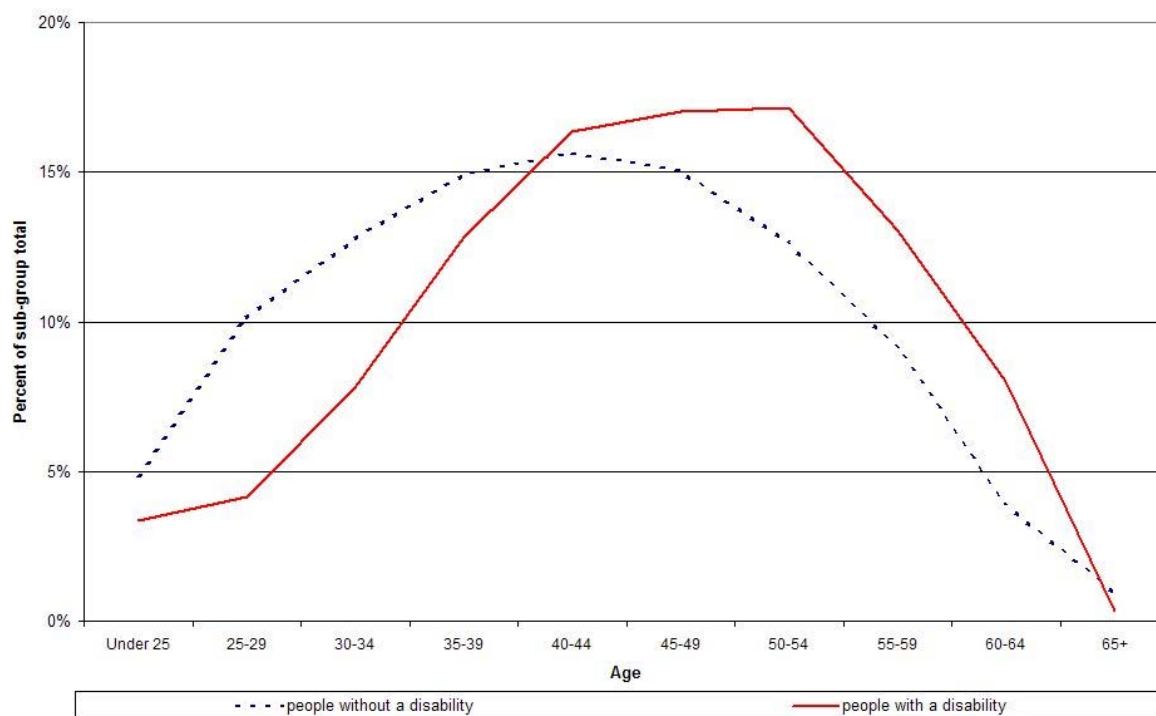
<sup>8</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2007). *2006 Disability Survey*

## Age profile

Public servants with disabilities have an older age structure than those without disabilities. This is in line with Statistics NZ's 2006 Disability Survey findings, where the proportion of people with disabilities in the general population increases significantly for those over 45 years of age.

Figure 1 shows the age structure of people with and without disabilities in the Public Service, based on information from the SSC's CPDS 2005. The CPDS asks respondents which age bracket they fit into, rather than stating an absolute age, so it is difficult to provide any further analysis of the age of people with disabilities in the Public Service.

**Figure 1: Age structure by disability status**

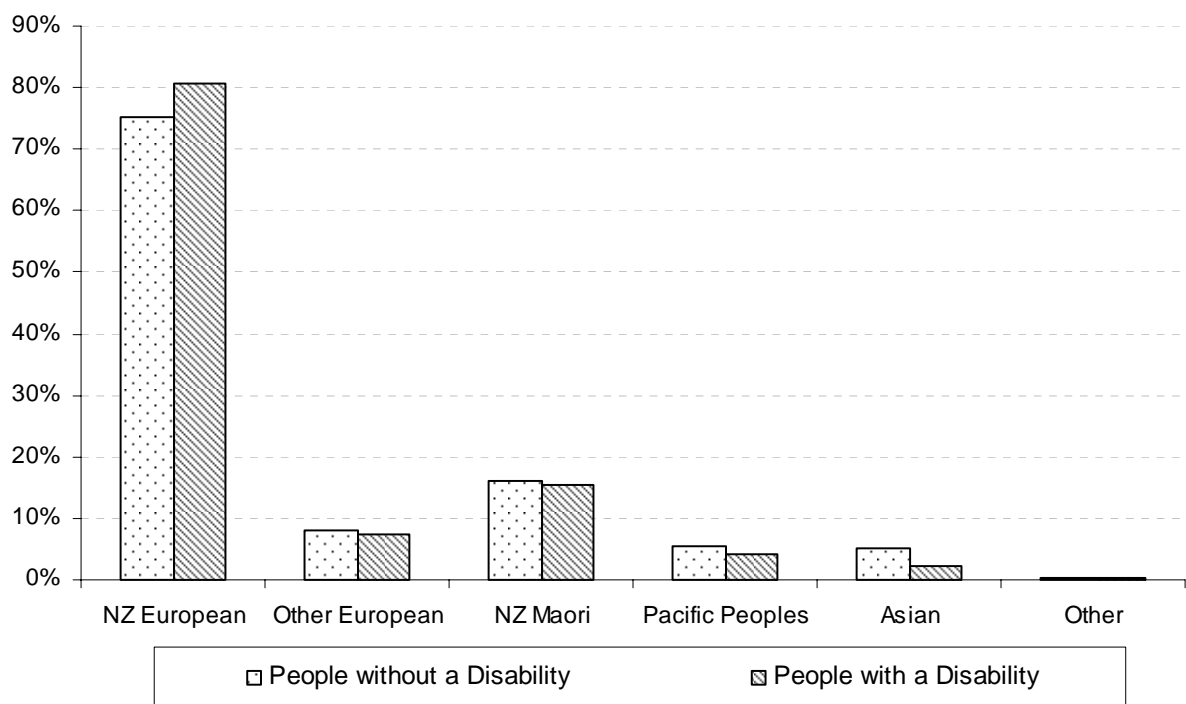


Source: State Services Commission (2006). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005*

## Ethnicity

People with disabilities in the Public Service have a similar ethnic profile to the overall Public Service. This is in contrast to the total New Zealand population, where the disability rate (the proportion of people with a disability) is higher for European and Maori than other ethnic groups.<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 shows the ethnicity of people with and without disabilities in the Public Service.

**Figure 2: Ethnicity by disability status**



Source: State Services Commission (2006). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005*

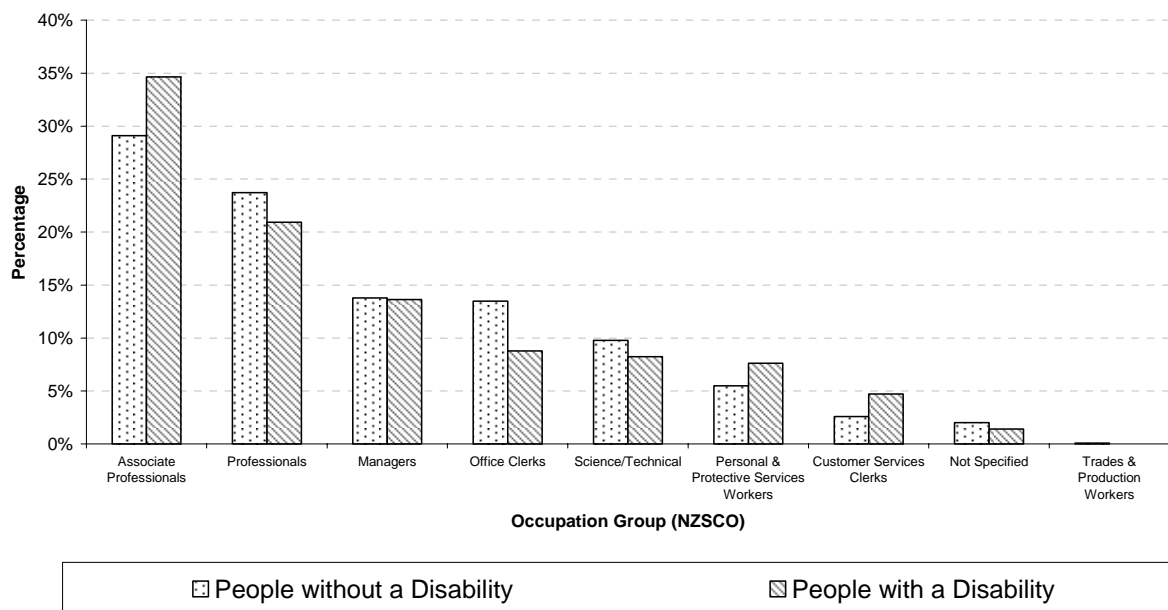
<sup>9</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2007). *2006 Disability Survey*

## Occupations

People with disabilities employed in the Public Service are more likely to be employed in the 'associate professional' occupation group than people without disabilities. The associate professional occupation group includes roles such as social worker, case worker, customs officer and call centre operator.

Figure 3 shows that only 8.8% of people with disabilities are likely to hold an 'office clerk' or similar role, compared with 13.5% of people without disabilities. This indicates that people with disabilities are less likely to be employed in roles such as general clerk, secretary, and word processing operator, which are sometimes perceived as 'entry level' roles requiring lower levels of qualification and experience.

**Figure 3: Occupation group by disability status**



Source: State Services Commission (2006). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005*

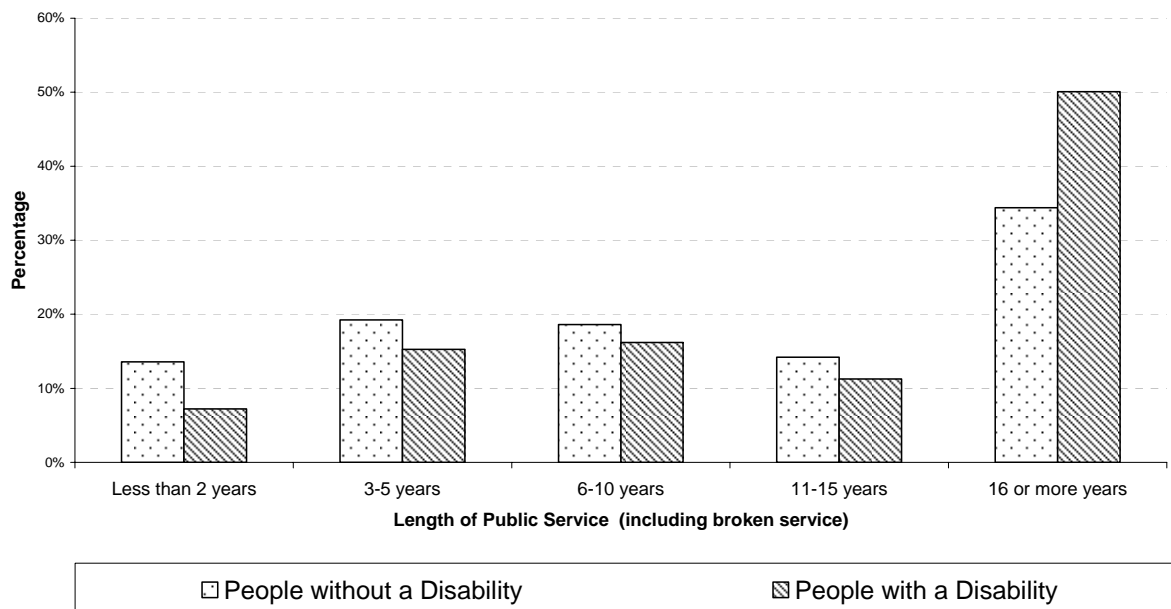
## Length of service

People with disabilities tend to remain employed in the Public Service for greater lengths of time than people without disabilities. Figure 4 shows that half the public servants with disabilities have been employed in the Public Service for more than 16 years, compared with 34% of those without a disability.

However, less than 8% of people with disabilities had been employed in the Public Service for less than two years, compared with over 13% of people without disabilities. The qualitative interviews (discussed in Chapter Three) indicate that departments are not specifically targeting recruitment initiatives at people with disabilities; they are more focused on removing barriers in the recruitment and selection process for those who do apply.

There may be some correlation between the age profile and length of service of people with disabilities in the Public Service. People with longer lengths of service are likely to be older. Older people are more likely to develop or experience disabilities. However, there is insufficient information on people with disabilities who have longer service to provide robust analysis of these issues.

**Figure 4: Length of public service by disability status**



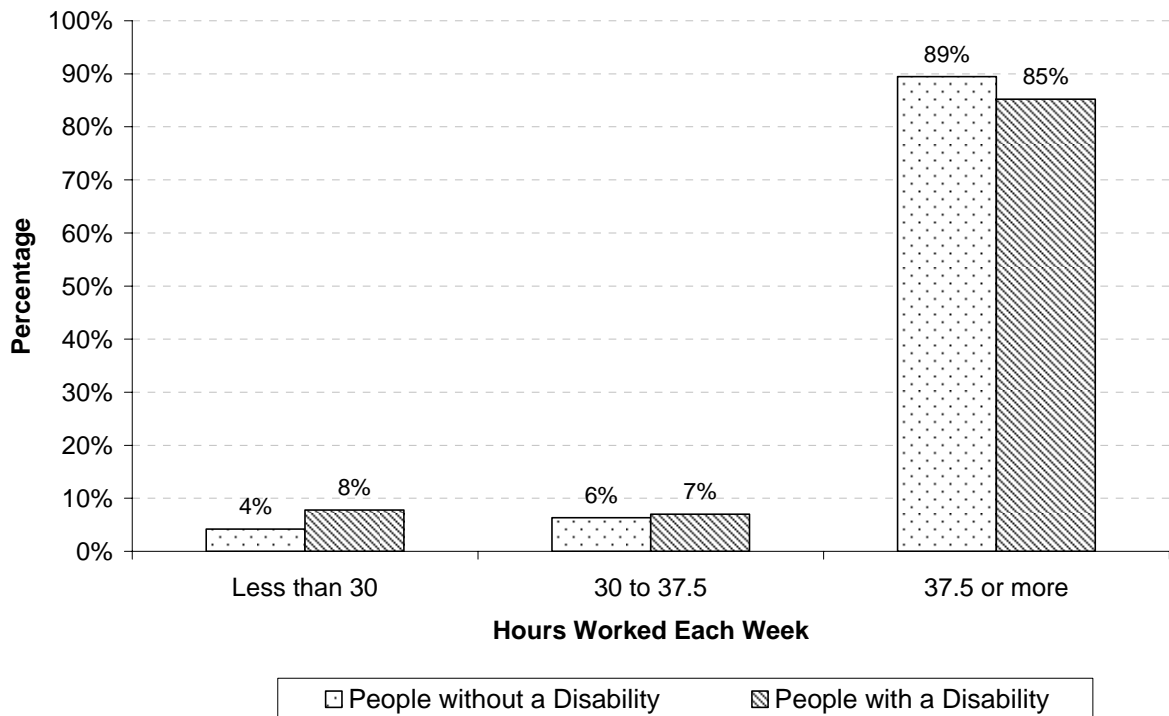
Source: State Services Commission (2006). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005*

## Hours of work

In the Public Service, a higher proportion of people with disabilities work less than 30 hours per week than people without disabilities. And, proportionally fewer people with disabilities work more than 37.5 hours per week. Statistics NZ define 'full time' employment as usually working more than 30 hours per week. The SSC differentiates between those working less than 30 hours, those working 30 to 37.5 hours, and those working more than 37.5 hours per week.

However, as Figure 5 shows, there is very little difference overall between the working hours of those with and those without disabilities.

**Figure 5: Hours of work by disability status**



Source: State Services Commission (2006). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005*

## **Chapter Three: Meeting the employment requirements of people with disabilities**

This chapter explores how departments are identifying and meeting the employment requirements of people with disabilities, drawing on the SSC's 2005 CPDS and findings from qualitative interviews with departments conducted by the SSC in 2008.

During April and May 2008, the SSC carried out qualitative interviews with Public Service departments to understand how departments are identifying and meeting the employment requirements of people with disabilities. The SSC engaged a disability and equal employment opportunities specialist to interview human resource managers and advisors from nine Public Service departments. The nine departments that participated in the interviews were representative of the size and functional classifications of Public Service departments.

Size relates to the number of full time equivalent employees (FTE) of the department (up to 199 FTE, 200-999 FTE, and 1000 or more FTE), and function relates to the primary purpose of the department (service delivery, policy or mixed policy and service delivery).

An appreciative inquiry methodology was used by the interviewer to discover best practices, achievements, values and the vision of departments in meeting the employment requirements of people with disabilities. Interviewees were asked for examples of what was working well, what they would like to improve on or do differently, and what steps could be taken to move towards that outcome, with the intention that these positive examples could be strengthened and built on for the future.

To ensure the findings from the interviews were indicative of the experiences and practices of the whole Public Service, the findings were made available to all Public Service departments for comment before being incorporated into this report.

### ***Attraction and recruitment***

The qualitative interviews indicate that departments are working towards removing barriers to equal employment opportunities in their recruitment and selection processes. Appointments are based on merit, and departments emphasised their desire to appoint the best person for the job, regardless of impairment or other differences.

Interview respondents indicated that they use a range of websites to advertise vacancies, including the [jobs.govt.nz](http://jobs.govt.nz) website, recruitment websites and the department's own website. Public Service departments are required to have accessible websites, meaning the site is able to be read, understood, navigated, and interacted with by people with disabilities. For more information on web accessibility, visit: [www.webstandards.govt.nz](http://www.webstandards.govt.nz).

Some interview respondents had specifically ensured that the recruitment agencies they use are aware of the department's equal employment opportunities obligations. Many

departments are members of the EEO Trust's EEO Employers Group, and some use the EEO Trust Employers Group logo in recruitment advertising. A few departments include an EEO statement, welcoming applications from diverse groups of people, in their recruitment advertising.

Many departments accept applications for employment in a variety of formats, including online, email and hard copy. Some departments indicated they had adapted their usual recruitment processes to be more accessible for people with disabilities, for example printing documents in large-format or with enlarged text.

However, the interviews did not identify any specific departmental initiatives for actively identifying and recruiting people with disabilities as a potential candidate pool. Some departments had used specialist placement agencies, and many had participated in the Mainstream Supported Employment Programme.

Mainstream provides supported employment for people with *significant* disabilities only, and works with departments to create a specific position for the participant. It does not work with the full spectrum of people with disabilities. Many departments perceived this programme as the only potential recruitment initiative to attract and increase the representation of people with disabilities in their employment.

It appears that the Public Service could be more proactive in its strategies, policies and practices in attracting people with disabilities as candidates for vacancies.

Some possible strategies to attract and recruit people with disabilities proposed by the interviewees included:

- creating a culture of acceptance
- more disability awareness education (particularly around mental health)
- inclusion of specific wording in advertising that welcomes applications from people with disabilities
- making buildings more accessible (beyond minimum Building Code requirements)
- providing opportunities for people with disabilities to engage with the organisation, for example career days, career fairs and Mainstream Disability Mentoring Week
- developing relationships with employment agencies for people with disabilities
- establishing staff disability networks
- working with the careers and disability support services of tertiary institutions to target graduates with disabilities.

### **Selection**

In most departments participating in the qualitative interviews, selection decisions rest with the hiring line manager, with support from the human resources team. When people with disabilities are short-listed for positions, respondents reported they were

generally good at making accommodations for interviews if required, such as having a support person, engaging a sign language interpreter, using video interviews and enlarging document text.

However, some respondents noted that while their departments were procedurally strong in relation to diversity (including disability), actual practice could vary between hiring managers.

There is a need for equality and diversity policies and procedures to become embedded into everyday practice, so that departments are able to recruit and select the best candidates for each position and develop a pool of future candidates who want to work in the Public Service.

### ***On-boarding***

Bringing a new staff member on board also includes engaging them with the social life and culture of the team, work unit and the whole organisation. Departmental representatives were asked how they facilitated the social integration of staff with disabilities.

Most respondents noted that their organisations were inclusive of all people, and that people with disabilities were included in events such as official welcomes, morning and afternoon teas, team meetings and social club events. One team leader arranged awareness and sign language training when a Deaf person joined the team, to facilitate effective team communication.

### ***Workplace accommodations for employees***

Statistics NZ's 2006 Disability Survey shows that of the approximate 4,700 people with disabilities in the Public Service proxy group, there were 1,400 instances where a specific workplace accommodation or adjustment was required because of disability. This represents an incidence rate of 30%. In contrast, the incidence rate was only 20% overall for all people with disabilities in employment. Where people have indicated they required more than one accommodation, each accommodation has been counted as a separate instance.

The types of accommodations required include:

- needing a person to help in the job (e.g. a reader or sign language interpreter)
- needing technical equipment (e.g. voice synthesiser, or other technological equipment)
- needing communication services (such as conversion of print to Braille or enlarged print)
- needing changes to work area or work equipment
- having modified duties or hours of work
- requiring building modifications (e.g. ramps, lifts, accessible toilets or easy access work areas).

The qualitative interviews indicated that departments are generally responsive to the specific accommodations required for employees with a disability on the job.

However, this appears to be inconsistent with the experiences of people with disabilities employed in the Public Service proxy group surveyed in the Statistics NZ 2006 Disability Survey. Of the 1,400 instances requiring specific accommodations, the data indicates that just over half these needs were met of these needs were met by the Public Service employer. The sample size of the Public Service proxy group from Statistics NZ's 2006 Disability Survey is too small to draw any valid conclusions based on this information or to explore the specific accommodation requirements in depth.

Some examples of specific accommodations by departments participating in the interviews include:

- an out of town candidate with mobility impairment was interviewed by telephone, and once appointed, the department arranged temporary, accessible living arrangements close to the workplace. When the employee found a permanent home, the department provided a taxi card for use when using public transport was difficult
- providing a long-term mentoring arrangement for a long-time employee with disabilities who was nervous about forthcoming organisational change
- department initiated involvement of specialist support services (such as the Royal Foundation of the Blind or specialist assessment and rehabilitation providers) to develop solutions that enable employees to continue to work when their conditions change
- holding positions open for staff who were off work while receiving cancer treatment
- changing the nature and location of work, altering the layout of the work area and introducing flexible working hours
- liaising with health professionals such as specialists, doctors and support groups
- bringing in specialists (doctors, support groups and so on) to provide information to the whole team
- ongoing ergonomic assessments and provision of equipment required.

Often an impairment, disability, injury or illness occurs or deteriorates while someone is in employment. Departmental human resource teams are generally approached by the manager or the individual concerned to 'talk through' these situations as they arise.

In addition to specific accommodations for staff with disabilities, many departments have policies and practices that benefit all staff, such as on-site car parking, only leasing or purchasing automatic vehicles, guidelines on accessible accommodation and venue hire, funding available for specific requirements, and 'return to work' policies. Workplace and workstation assessments were a common way of discovering accommodation needs of people with disabilities in Public Service departments.

### ***Career progression and development***

The SSC Career Progression and Development Survey (CPDS) shows that people with disabilities are less likely to want a higher level role and are more likely to report that they had achieved all they wanted in their careers, than public servants without disabilities.<sup>10</sup> This might be indicative of the career stage of those with an older age profile and longer length of service, characteristic of public servants with disabilities.

Public servants with disabilities were just as likely as those without disabilities to report they would be flexible in their work in order to progress their careers, such as changing work areas, or moving into the private sector.<sup>11</sup>

However, people with disabilities in the Public Service were more likely (26%) to report that they were concerned that the selection process would not be fair in applying for a higher level position than people without disabilities (17%). Other perceived barriers for career advancement for people with disabilities included not having the necessary qualifications, lack of self-confidence and concern about ability to balance work and family responsibilities. Public servants with disabilities were less likely to want to assume additional responsibilities, work additional hours or relocate in order to gain a high-level position than their colleagues without disabilities.<sup>12</sup>

Interview respondents reported that their organisations did not specifically tailor career or leadership development opportunities for people with disabilities, but provided accommodations when required to enable people with disabilities to participate in development programmes.

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<sup>10</sup> State Services Commission (2006). *Career Progression and Development Survey, 2005*

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

## **Chapter Four: Initiatives that support people with disabilities in the Public Service**

Many human resource managers and advisors who participated in the qualitative interviews said that they had strong and inclusive equal employment opportunities policies, but were interested in further developing the practical implementation of policies, procedures and initiatives. Many acknowledged that they could 'do more' in the diversity area, and particularly in understanding and meeting the employment requirements of people with disabilities.

This chapter outlines a few specific initiatives underway across the State sector and in Public Service departments. This is not a full account of all initiatives, but a few examples of the good work occurring in relation to disability in the Public Service workplace.

### ***Sector-wide initiatives***

#### **Mainstream Supported Employment Programme**

The Mainstream Supported Employment Programme has been facilitating employment opportunities in the State sector for people with significant disabilities since 1976. Mainstream works in collaboration with State sector organisations to create placements for participants and subsidises salaries of Mainstream participants for up to two years.

Participants are not expected to be 'job-ready', but are supported in their employment with on-the-job training to build up skills and experience over time. Mainstream provides a step into real work opportunities for people who are seriously disadvantaged by their disabilities.

Mainstream subsidises the salary of participants for up to two years. Participating agencies are eligible for a 100% salary subsidy for Mainstream participants in the first year and 50% in the second year. After two years, it is expected that the Mainstream participants will have gained the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to compete for employment on their own merit.

The Mainstream Supported Employment Programme has placed more than 2000 people with significant disabilities in supported employment since 1976 and in June 2008 had 220 placements in the State sector.

In July 2008 Mainstream moved from the SSC to the Ministry of Social Development. To learn more about the Mainstream programme, visit [www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream/index.html).

## **Mainstream Disability Mentoring Week**

The Mainstream Supported Employment Programme held its second Disability Mentoring Week in April 2008. The Disability Mentoring Week gives final year secondary and tertiary students with disabilities the opportunity to work along side State sector employees with a disability for a day.

The purpose of the mentoring week is that both ‘mentors’ and ‘mentees’ will gain an appreciation of the contribution people with disabilities can make in workplace, to inspire career development and to foster ongoing mentoring relationships. The project has demonstrated the potential for state sector organisations to be more inclusive of staff with disabilities and highlighted another pool of talent for organisations to consider for future staffing requirements. For more information on the Mainstream Programme and Disability Mentoring Week, visit:

[www.ms.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream/index.html](http://www.ms.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream/index.html).

## **EEO Practitioners Network**

A quarterly EEO Practitioners Network meeting is co-hosted by SSC and the Human Rights Commission. People with responsibility for (or an interest in) EEO/ Diversity in their organisations come together to share information and to hear about current and forthcoming projects and initiatives. Membership is open to Public Service and wider State Service organisations (including Crown Entities and non-Public Service departments). For more information, contact the SSC or the Human Rights Commission.

## **New Zealand Disability Strategy**

The New Zealand Disability Strategy (NZDS) presents a long-term plan for changing New Zealand from a disabling to an inclusive society. The NZDS presents 15 specific objectives, including ‘opportunities in employment and economic contribution for people with disabilities’.

Public Service departments regularly report progress against the 15 NZDS objectives, including reporting planned actions and achievements in relation to being a ‘good employer’, and how they are supporting staff with disabilities. Specifically, Public Service departments are required to measure the accessibility of their employment practices against the outcome of ‘Government agencies provide equal opportunities in employment for disabled people to be recruited, retained and promoted on the same basis as non-disabled people’. For more information on the NZDS, visit: [www.odi.govt.nz](http://www.odi.govt.nz).

## ***Departmental initiatives***

Often, disability is considered in the broader context of 'diversity' within departments. The initiatives outlined below are some Public Service examples of specific activities to support people with disabilities, raise disability awareness, and integrate equality and diversity throughout organisations. These do not represent all the initiatives underway in Public Service departments, but are a sample of the good work in progress.

### **Disability awareness training**

The Ministry of Health offers a Disability Awareness Training programme to all staff. Participation in the programme is voluntary, but not well attended. The Ministry is exploring ways to increase participation. The programme is delivered by an external provider and is available at no charge to participants or their business units. The half-day programme covers:

- understanding the social and cultural construction of inclusive and exclusive behaviour and its effects on people with disabilities
- identifying personal role 'obligation' to advance inclusive behaviour in the workplace
- understanding the Ministry's context, such as Health goals, strategies, frameworks and conventions as they apply to disability, including the New Zealand Disability Strategy
- discussing the strategic priorities and the 'business as usual' issues.

### **Diversity training for managers**

Diversity is linked to respect and inclusiveness in the workplace in the Ministry of Health's capability development work. There are sessions on diversity and what a respectful and inclusive workplace would look like at each orientation for all staff, whatever their role. There are specific interventions which focus on building awareness of diversity for staff that are leading and managing teams. Diversity (including disability) awareness is included in the 'Stepping into Management' development programme for new managers at the Ministry of Health and the 'Managers Toolkit' has been updated to include practical tips for employing people with disabilities and other diversity resources.

### **Building capability**

New employees of the New Zealand Customs Service complete questions contained in a set of 'diversity workbooks'. This initiative is used to identify opportunities to enhance the skills, knowledge and practice of new employees in relation to diversity (including disability). Any areas requiring development are followed up at an individual or team level. This initiative is improving communication with, and understanding of, diverse groups at the front line of New Zealand Customs Service as well as at head office. Customs have been able to establish a 'base-line' of competence in working with and managing diversity, and they are working to increase this base-line over time.

## **Disability intranet forum**

A key initiative for the Department of Corrections in 2008 is the launch of a 'Staff Disability Intranet Forum'. The forum will facilitate communication and establish a support network for staff with disabilities. The forum will also provide a mechanism for raising disability issues or areas of concern so that the Department can better understand the needs of staff with disabilities, and provide further assistance and support.

## **Leveraging internal communications**

Inland Revenue makes good use of their internal communications to raise awareness of disability in the workplace and support staff with disabilities. Recent articles in the internal newsletter have included profiles of staff members with disabilities, and promoting Inland Revenue's participation in the Mainstream Disability Awareness Week programme. Inland Revenue also publishes an internal 'diversity calendar', which supports discussions of celebrations, ceremonies, practices and other important events for diverse communities (including people with disabilities).

## **Other initiatives**

In addition to the specific initiatives outlined above, departments undertake a variety of other activities to develop awareness and build a supportive workplace for people with disabilities in the Public Service:

- attending disability focused events such as the Mainstream awards ceremonies
- celebrating success stories
- including knowledge of evacuation procedures for people with disabilities in health and safety training
- customer-service training that includes responsiveness to people with disabilities
- New Zealand Relay Service training for front-line staff (telecommunications service for deaf, deafblind, speech impaired and hearing impaired users)
- optional New Zealand Sign Language and Deaf awareness training
- diversity calendars
- posters with messages of valuing difference and diversity displayed in key areas
- reinforcing that staff are able to, and should, raise their concerns or needs with their managers
- EEO/ diversity planning
- use of information from exit interviews, engagement surveys and general feedback to shape policies and practices.

Activities departments would like to further develop include:

- developing tools to give others an insight into disability, along the lines of the 'Like Minds, Like Mine' campaign on changing attitudes towards mental illness
- workshops identifying and exploring organisational values
- accreditation or a preferred supplier list of providers of disability training
- development of consistent standards in disability awareness
- integration of EEO/ diversity in strategic and operational aspects of the business
- demonstrated commitment to EEO / diversity from senior leaders within organisations.

## **Appendix One: Collecting disability information**

The SSC has provided guidance to departments on EEO for people with disabilities in the Public Service, which includes a section on collecting statistical data and information. This can be viewed at: [www.ssc.govt.nz/moving-forward](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/moving-forward)

### ***Principles for departmental collection of disability information***

- Each staff member reports his or her own disability (or lack of disability). Self-identification provides statistics that are most appropriate to users of EEO statistics and the EEO groups themselves.
- Staff members may report more than one category of disability (refer to Chapter One for information on categories of disability). The collection of multiple disability categories recognises that people can be affected in more than one functional area, and recording and reporting systems must meet the expectations and requirements of staff members. For example, if staff can record up to two categories of disability, then the recording system must include both categories.
- Disability information must be stored as it was reported by the staff member (as identified by the staff member).

### ***During recruitment and selection***

It is good practice to monitor your own recruitment process. This may include collecting EEO information (including disability data) from applicants.

Collecting disability data at the time of application has the potential to inappropriately influence decisions on an applicant's suitability for employment where the disability is not directly related to the skills and qualifications needed to perform the job. For this reason, collecting disability data after a person is appointed is likely to produce better quality data.

However, if disability data is collected on application for employment, consider:

- clear statements around the purpose and intended use of the information being gathered
- careful wording of questions, to encourage disclosure and reduce concern that the information provided may be used inappropriately
- collection of disability data, for statistical purposes, on a separate form that will not be used by the selection panel (and so, cannot inappropriately influence any short-listing or selection decisions)
- accessibility of the forms used
- use of statistical data to identify recruitment and selection trends and to inform the development of more effective and targeted recruitment advertising
- use of information to provide improved 'candidate care', for example understanding and meeting the needs of candidates in interview situations (access, support people, technology and so on)

- asking open questions in interviews that allow candidates to explain how they can do the job
- appropriate questions than enable candidates to explain the implications of their disability, and the workplace accommodations required.

### ***At commencement of employment***

- Be clear about the purpose of collecting disability information. Is it for statistical purposes? Or is it for identifying and meeting the employment requirements of particular employees?
- How do you collect the information?
  - written or electronic forms - are they accessible in a variety of formats?
  - kiosk or self- service Human Resource Information Service (HRIS)?
- How will you use the information gathered?
  - prioritising workstation assessments?
  - establishing connections with staff network groups?
  - understanding emergency procedure requirements for employees?
  - identifying workplace accommodation requirements and ways of meeting these needs?
  - other uses?

### ***During employment***

- How do you keep the disability information up-to-date?
  - annual staff survey?
  - kiosk / self-service HRIS?
  - ad hoc?
- How do you gather disability data to develop an understanding of the employment trends and employment requirements of your employees?
  - consider including disability data in the demographic sections of staff surveys (such as engagement surveys or climate surveys)
  - workforce profiling and workforce planning
- Do you regularly compare your workforce profile with that of the Public Service, the New Zealand labour market and the New Zealand population?

### ***At termination of employment***

- Is disability information collected as part of the exit interview process?
- Do you analyse this information to understand employment trends and requirements for people with disabilities (or other groups) in your organisation?





STATE SERVICES COMMISSION

100 Molesworth Street, Wellington

PO Box 329, Wellington

Phone +64 4 495 6600

Fax +64 4 495 6686

[www.ssc.govt.nz](http://www.ssc.govt.nz)