



# The Disability Discrimination Act:

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**Analysis of data from the  
ONS Omnibus Survey 1996-2006**

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Summary



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“ Analysis of data across the ten years has indicated significant changes and indications show that there has been good progress in improving the rights of disabled people and removing barriers that they face. ”



# Background

This report analyses ONS Omnibus data for 1996, 2001, 2005 and 2006 and analyses the trends in awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) over time. The analysis presented aims to identify people who are likely to be covered by the provisions of the DDA and to demonstrate:

- how awareness of the DDA has changed over time;
- the extent of reported difficulty obtaining goods and services;
- how experience of accessing goods and services has changed since 1996; and
- the extent to which there is reported difficulty with accessing goods and services relating particularly to accommodation and travel.

Analysis of data across the ten years has indicated significant changes and indications show that there has been good progress in improving the rights of disabled people and removing barriers that they face. Generally there is positive news although there are still areas which could be improved with some groups faring worse than others.

# Key Findings

## Awareness of the DDA

Awareness of the DDA has increased significantly among the general population from 40 per cent in 1996 to 73 percent in 2006. The general trend in the data shows that over the long term, awareness of the DDA for all people across Great Britain is increasing. Analysing the data shows some interesting variations by groups and over time:

- Whilst awareness of the DDA has increased for both disabled and non-disabled people, the increase has been slower for the disabled population. Disabled people have a lower awareness of the DDA (68 per cent) than non disabled people (75 per cent). Awareness of the DDA is key in alerting people to where rights exist and allowing challenges and progress to be made.
- Small variations in awareness exist across gender, age and employment status, but those over 65 have lower awareness of the DDA than younger groups and those out of work have lower awareness than those in work.
- Small differences in awareness levels across some functional difficulty groups in 1996 have become significantly larger by 2005.
- All of the regions have mirrored the general trend of increased awareness over the time periods analysed. The highest awareness is in the South East.
- Groups that have low levels of awareness of the DDA by name may not necessarily be unaware of legislation giving rights to disabled people by nature. This is particularly true for those over 65 and those out of work.

### Access to goods and services

Since 1996 the proportion of disabled people facing difficulties in accessing goods and services has decreased. However, a third of disabled people still experience access difficulties, with one in five of these experiencing difficulties when shopping. It is encouraging that for the majority of people who reported no access difficulties this was because they can use the services without difficulty rather than because they no longer used the services.

- The proportion of disabled people facing difficulties accessing any goods and services has dropped by eight percentage points from 42 per cent in 1996 to 34 per cent by 2006. Most activities, goods and services enquired about are difficult to access for fewer than one in ten disabled people.
- Trends between 1996 and 2006 are the same for men and women. Some goods and services show a gender difference in the experience of difficulties such as shopping, private clubs and sports events.
- Generally all age groups showed a reduction in difficulties accessing goods and services across time. The age group experiencing the least difficulties was 65-74 year olds.
- Whilst those out of work are still more likely to have difficulties accessing goods and services than those in work (41 per cent compared with 21 per cent) the proportion reporting access difficulties has reduced more since 1996 than for those in work.

“ Generally all age groups showed a reduction in difficulties accessing goods and services across time ”

- Those people with limitations relating to recognising physical danger have historically had the highest proportion of individuals with difficulties accessing goods and services, although this has significantly decreased (from 75 per cent to 59 per cent). This is in contrast to those with limitations to physical co-ordination whose experience of difficulties has been increasing.
- Those with limitations relating to memory or the ability to learn, concentrate or understand are the least likely to have access difficulties (50 per cent).
- Almost half (46 per cent) of those with a limiting long-standing illness have difficulty with at least one service. This is in contrast to just 12 per cent of the population on medication and 13 per cent of the past disability population.

### Transport

Looking specifically at transport, although full trend data is not available, it is clear that there are much fewer people experiencing problems with transport than those who do not experience transport problems.

- Around a quarter of disabled respondents experience some kind of difficulty accessing transport, mainly related to rail, bus and coach travel.
- Higher proportions of disabled women, those aged 75 and over, and those out of work have difficulties accessing transport with around one in every three of these groups reporting problems.
- The highest level of transport difficulties was found in the North East (30 per cent), whilst the lowest was found in the East Midlands (17 per cent). Most regions saw little change between 2005 and 2006.

### Those covered by the DDA but with no access difficulties

- Just over half of disabled people do not experience difficulties with goods, services and transport. Fourth-fifths (80 per cent) of those with no access difficulties say it is because “I can use the services without any difficulty”.
- Men, those aged under 75, those in paid work and those with difficulties lifting are less likely to experience access difficulties with goods, services and transport, compared with their counterparts.

“ Around a quarter of disabled respondents experience some kind of difficulty accessing transport ”

## Rental, sale and adjustment of premises

There are very low numbers of disabled people reporting that they have been refused sale or rent of a property.

- Less than one per cent of disabled people have ever been refused the sale of a property for reasons related to their health problem or disability, this is unchanged since 1996.
- One in twenty (five per cent) disabled people have requested adjustment to properties for reasons relating to their health problem or disability.
- The majority of adjustment requests are for alterations to kitchen, bathroom or toilet (68 per cent), the next most common was for specialist equipment (22 per cent in 2006).
- Around two-thirds of alteration requests were carried out and the landlord paid in full for half of all requests.
- There are around 10 per cent of cases where it appears that requested alterations did not get carried out by the landlord, at least by the time of the survey.

## Those aged over 75

Disabled people aged 75 and over seem to experience more problems than younger people. For example, they are most likely to experience difficulties accessing transport and have a higher experience of problems accessing goods and services than their younger counterparts. As incidence of disability is higher in older age groups, and numbers of functional difficulties increase, this might be expected. This is of particular concern, because the findings show that this age group are least likely to be aware of the DDA (only 56 per cent), and yet they are more likely to be in need of its protection.

## Those not in paid employment

There was a consistent gap in the experiences of those in paid work, and those not in paid work throughout the analysis. Those not in paid work were less likely to be aware of the DDA and more likely to experience difficulties accessing goods services and transport. There are various factors that could help explain this. People in paid work experience less functional difficulties than those not in work, it may be that the nature of their impairment or functional limitation allows them to work more easily, or allows adjustments to their workplace and role to be more easily made. This is likely to also be the case for goods and services i.e. the adjustments needed for these people are easier to provide. Those who experience less barriers to work are likely to experience less barriers in other areas of their life. Also, in terms of a raised awareness among those in work, this may be due to the fact that employers are communicating this information to their employees. We know from other research that awareness among employers is also rising<sup>1</sup>. Finally, there is a link to the fact that some of those not in work will be older and retired, and we know that this group have more functional limitations.

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<sup>1</sup> Simm, C., Aston, J. et al (2007) Organisations' responses to the Disability Discrimination Act DWP Research report 410, London





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