The Perceptions of People with Disabilities as to the Effectiveness of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Article Summary

Hinton (2003) examined the perceptions of people with disabilities as to the effectiveness of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) with regard to accessibility issues covered by Title II (public sector), Title III (private sector), & Title IV (telecommunications). Factors such as types of disability, age of onset of the disability, individual employment status, and the individual's membership in disability organizations, which could contribute to how people with disabilities perceive the effectiveness of the ADA were also examined.

A survey was administered to people with disabilities from 11 disability organizations in Tennessee regarding their perceptions of accessibility issues covered by Title II, III, & IV of the ADA. Hinton surveyed participants' perceptions regarding changes in accessibility to goods, programs, and services provided by covered entities since the passage of the ADA. Survey respondents rated changes in accessibility for entities such as governmental buildings, libraries, grocery stores, malls, banks, restaurants, telecommunications systems, and closed captions of televisions as well as other covered entities. Participants of the survey reported their type of disability, which included the following: visual (7%), hearing (13.3%), and mobility (79.7). Sixty-one percent of the survey respondents were unemployed and 38.6% were employed at the time of the study.

Hinton uncovered several interesting factors regarding respondents' perceptions of changes in accessibility for Titles II, III, and IV of the ADA. Hinton reports, "For both Title II (public sector) and Title III (private sector), a majority of the participants rated accessibility as not better. However, the public sector was rated higher (by 15.%) than the private sector." Telecommunications or Title IV differed from Titles II and III showing survey participants (60.3%) rating telecommunications as better. Hinton found that Title IV rated highest and Title III was rated the lowest throughout the data. Regarding disability type, Hinton reports, "there is a disparity among the perceptions of people with different types of disabilities as to the effectiveness of ADA's implementation regarding Title II accessibility issues." One trend uncovered by Hinton was that individuals who had had disabilities since birth were less likely to perceive accessibility as being better when compared to those who became disabled in childhood or adulthood. Hinton also reports that when individuals belong to highly active disability organizations rated Title II and Title IV accessibility issues as better. This did not hold true for Title III. It's reported that employment status had no influence on individual perceptions of the ADA's effectiveness. The most statistically significant factor Hinton reports is that people with visual disabilities rated Title II and III much lower than persons with hearing or mobility issues.

Hinton concludes, "Differences in perception of accessibility among the three titles did emerge from the analysis. The public sector (Title II) was rated somewhat higher than the private sector (Title III) in improved accessibility since the passage of the ADA." However, Hinton states in neither case did a majority of respondents rate accessibility issues covered by these titles as better. "In contrast, a majority of respondents rated Title IV as better. Hinton believes, "Further research is needed to examine in more detail the specific factors that limit accessibility."

Reference
