

# **An Overview of the National EEOC ADA Research Project**

**by McMahon, B.T., Edwards, R., Rumrill, P.D., & Hursh, N. (2005). An overview of the National EEOC ADA Research Project. Work, 25(1), 1-7.**

## Article Summary

This research project was undertaken by Brian T. McMahon, Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and his colleagues at Virginia Commonwealth University. Beginning in 2003, McMahon and a network of 25 volunteers began examining data from the Integrated Mission System (IMS) of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to answer specific questions about allegations of disability discrimination in the workplace. These questions included the following:

- Are there discrete organizational behaviors that in the aggregate constitute workplace discrimination?
- What is the specific nature and scope of workplace discrimination against Americans with disabilities?
- Does workplace discrimination against Americans with disabilities vary as a function of personal characteristics such as type of impairment, gender, age, race or ethnicity?
- To the extent that employers perpetrate workplace discrimination, does it vary as a function of the employer's industry, location, or size?
- When Americans with disabilities file allegations of workplace discrimination, what proportion of complaints has merit, and what proportion lacks merit once the investigation has been concluded?
- Does the resolution of allegations vary depending on characteristics of the complainant or employer?

Researchers looked at allegations of disability discrimination that had been filed with the EEOC during the period from July 26, 1992 (the first effective date of the ADA) through September 30, 2003 (the last full fiscal year for which data are available). From over 600,000 allegations filed during that period, they extracted a "study dataset" of 328,738 allegations that had been closed by the EEOC during the 11.2-year period. They excluded allegations for study in this early phase of this research project to maintain "clarity, consistency, and parsimony" based on the following criteria:

- Data fields were eliminated that would specifically identify the complainant, or Charging Party, or an employer, referred to as the Respondent.
- Incomplete investigations of disability discrimination were not used.
- Allegations that did not involve direct discrimination, such as retaliation, record of disability, and association with persons with disabilities, were excluded.
- Allegations containing errors or determined by an agency other than the EEOC were removed from the study dataset.

This article includes six tables that address EEOC information that will be common throughout the series of articles on the National EEOC ADA Research Project including:

- Frequency distribution of allegations in GENDIS, the overall database of charges regarding discrimination based on a known physical, sensory, or neurological impairment
- Definitions of the specific discriminatory behaviors that were alleged
- EEOC closures by type
- Charging Party variables by race/ethnicity
- Respondent variables by size and industry type

- Respondent variables by location

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