Breaking Down Work Barriers for People with Disabilities: Opportunities for Employers

Presenters:
Purvi Sevak and Alix Gould-Werth, Mathematica Policy Research
Kimberly Phillips, University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability

Discussant:
Alan McClain, Commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

Webinar
March 1, 2018

Welcome

Moderator:

Jody Schimmel Hyde

Mathematica Policy Research

About the Center for Studying Disability Policy (CSDP)

Mathematica established CSDP in 2007 to provide the nation's leaders with the data necessary to shape disability policy and programs to fully meet the needs of all Americans with disabilities.

Today's speakers

Purvi Sevak, Mathematica Policy Research

Alix Gould-Werth, Mathematica Policy Research

Kimberly Phillips, University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability

Alan McClain, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Commissioner

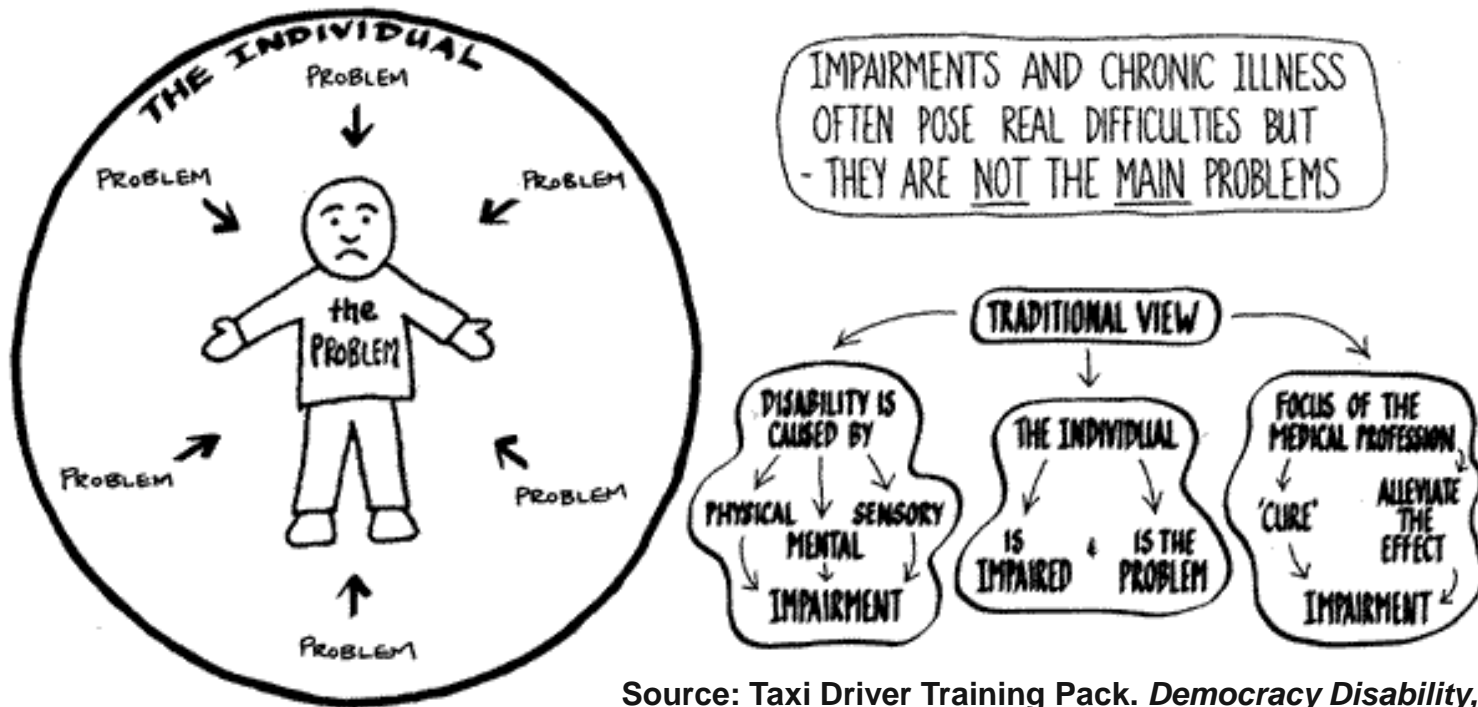# The Role of Workplace Accommodations in the Employment of People With Disabilities

Priyanka Anand
George Mason University

Purvi Sevak
Mathematica Policy Research

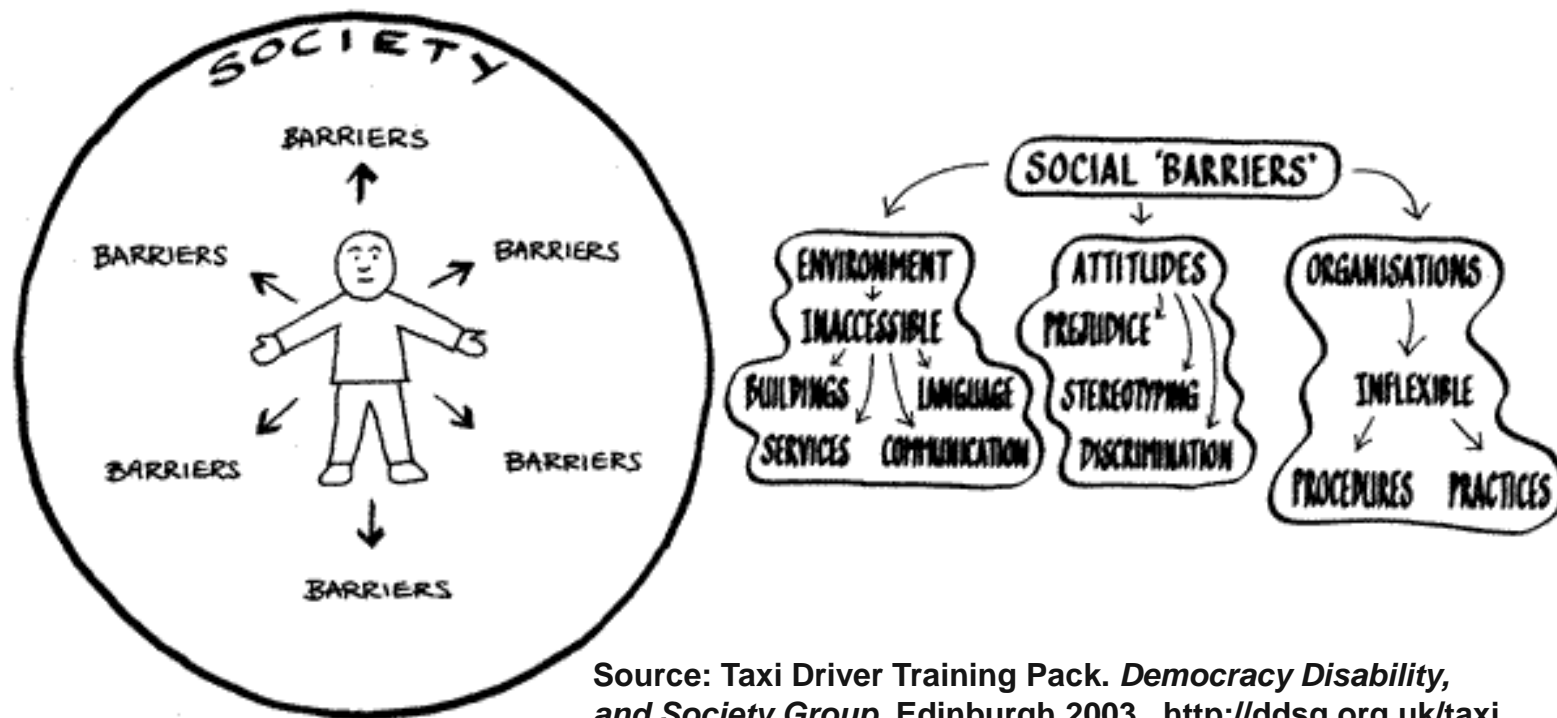# Traditional perspective on disability focuses on individual

Source: Taxi Driver Training Pack. *Democracy Disability, and Society Group.* Edinburgh 2003. http://ddsg.org.uk/taxi

Our study is motivated by a broader framework

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

SOCIETY

BARRIERS

BARRIERS   BARRIERS

BARRIERS   BARRIERS

BARRIERS

SOCIAL 'BARRIERS'

ENVIRONMENT
INACCESSIBLE
BUILDINGS   LANGUAGE
SERVICES COMMUNICATION

ATTITUDES
PREJUDICE
STEREOTYPING
DISCRIMINATION

ORGANISATIONS
INFLEXIBLE
PROCEDURES   PRACTICES

Source: Taxi Driver Training Pack. *Democracy Disability, and Society Group.* Edinburgh 2003. http://ddsg.org.uk/taxi

Accommodations important but unequally accessed

- **Workplace accommodations associated with:**
  - **Better employment outcomes (Burkhauser et al. 1995; Cook et al. 2015)**
  - **Delayed labor market exit among workers approaching retirement age (Hill et al. 2016)**

- **Receipt of accommodations**
  - **Varies by race and education (Clay and Alston, 2016; Hill et al. 2016)**
  - **Is higher among those with assertive personality traits (Hill et al. 2016)**

Questions addressed in this study

1. **Can accommodations address commonly cited employment barriers?**

2. **Are specific accommodations associated with higher job retention?**

3. **Which subgroups of individuals with disabilities are less likely to receive accommodations?**

Data from the Survey of Disability and Employment

- **Sample included 3,000 applicants to state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies in 2014**
  - **Includes Mississippi, New Jersey, and Ohio**
  - **Ages 25–60**

- **By applying to state VR, these individuals have demonstrated an interest in work**

- **Survey includes information on**
  - **Health and impairments**
  - **Demographics and education**
  - **Current and past employment**
  - **Reasons for not working**
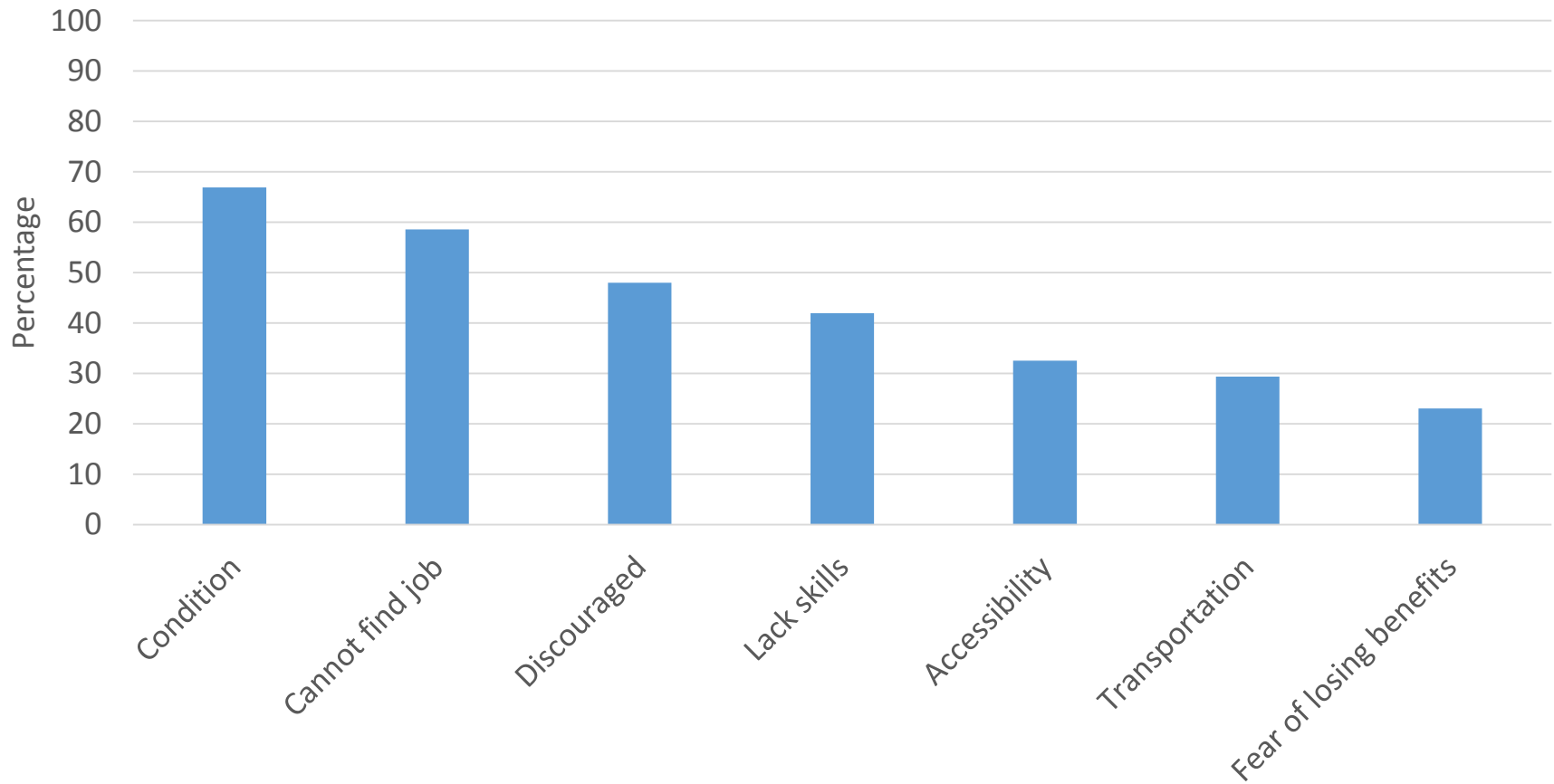 - **Receipt of accommodations**

Limit sample to those with some experience with employment

- **Varied employment history**
  - **34% working at VR application**
  - **51% have worked both before and after disability onset**
 - **22% have not worked since disability onset**

Can accommodations address common employment barriers?

- **The 66% of respondents who were not working at the time of the survey were asked to report the reason(s) they were not working**

- **Could report multiple reasons**

Nonworking applicants cited a number of employment barriers

Perceived barriers varied by type of disability
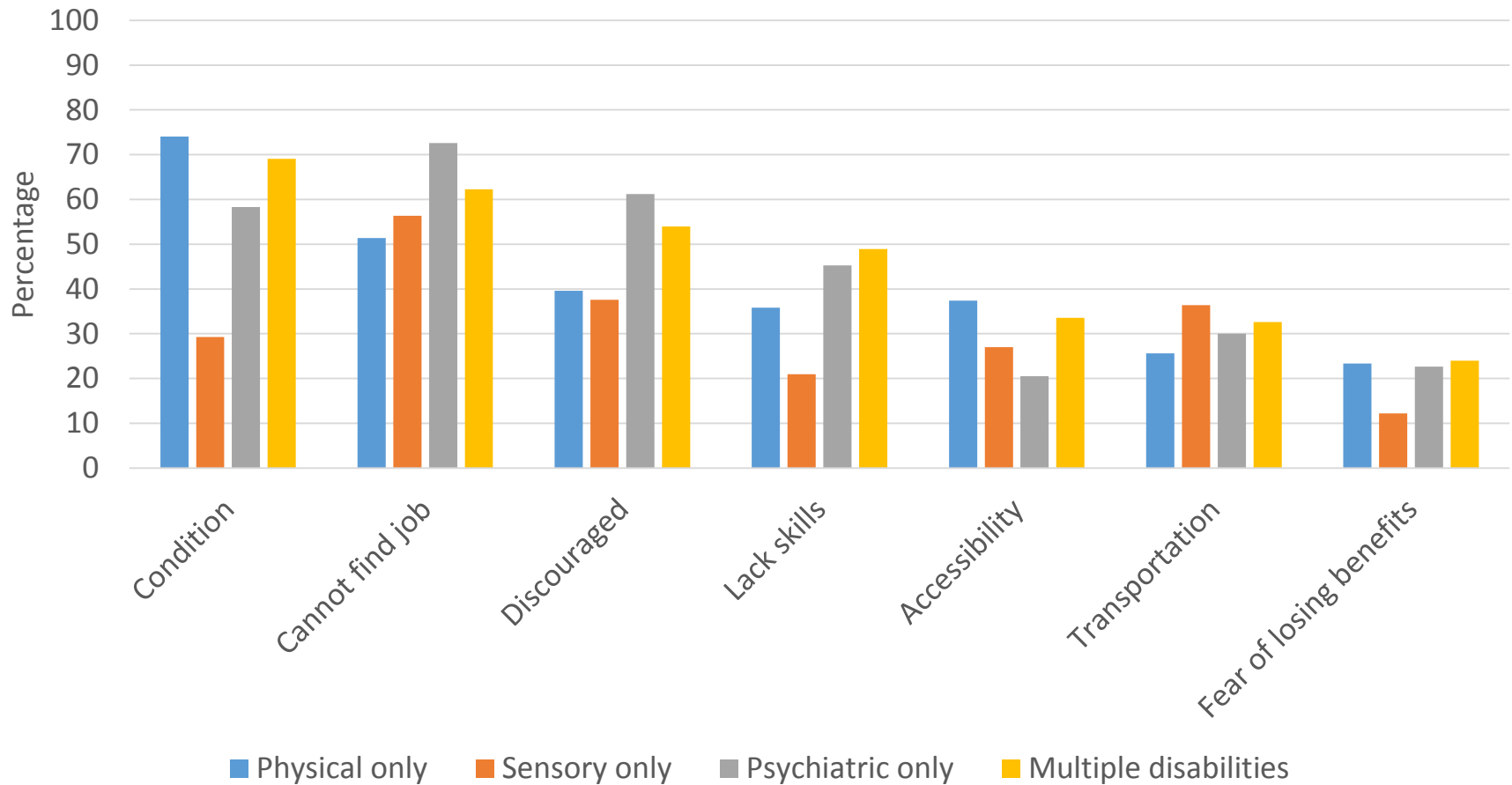
Are specific accommodations associated with higher job retention?

- **Estimated relationship between employment status and receipt of accommodation at most recent (current or last) job:**
  - Flexible schedule
  - Job coach
  - Modified job duties
  - Help with transportation
  - Equipment or modified work space
  - Personal care assistant
- **Controlled for demographics and impairments**

Accommodations associated with significantly higher employment rates

Relative to an overall employment rate of 34%

	Flexible schedule	Modified job duties	Transportation	Personal care assistant
Adjusted difference in employment rates among applicants who had received accommodation				
Physical only	↑8	--	↑8	--
Sensory only	--	--	↑8	--
Psychiatric only	--	--	--	--
Multiple disabilities	↑6	↑8	↑10	↑10

Which subgroups are less likely to receive accommodations?

- **Individuals who:**
  - Have physical or sensory disabilities only
  - Report poor health
  - Are older
  - Have had their disability for longer
- **They were also more likely to report inaccessibility as a barrier**

Summary

- **One-third of nonworking people with disabilities reported employment barriers that could be addressed by accommodations**

- **Receiving certain accommodations (transportation, flexible work schedule, and personal care attendant) is positively correlated with job retention**

- **Perceived barriers and receipt of accommodations vary across subgroups**

Implications for practice

- **Our findings are encouraging because they point to specific factors that practitioners and employers can address**

- **The fact that accommodations to address commonly perceived barriers are positively associated with employment suggests the need for additional efforts to expand provision**

- **Policies and programs can empower employers to better understand how to provide effective accommodations**

For more information

- **Anand, Priyanka, and Purvi Sevak. "The Role of Workplace Accommodations in the Employment of People with Disabilities."** *IZA Journal of Labor Policy,* **vol. 6, no. 12, 2017.** **https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40173-017-0090-4**

Acknowledgements and disclaimer

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- Hill, Matthew J., Nicole Maestas, and Kathleen J. Mullen. 2016. Employer Accommodation and Labor Supply of Disabled Workers. *Labour Economics* 41: 291–303.

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Employers' Perspectives on Accommodating and Retaining Employees with New Health Problems

**Alix Gould-Werth, Katherine Morrison,
Yonatan Ben-Shalom, Mathematica Policy Research**

CSDP webinar

Breaking Down Employment Barriers for People with Disabilities: The Employer Perspective

March 1, 2018

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STUDYING DISABILITY POLICY

Introduction:
Health problems affect the labor force

- Every year, millions of Americans lose jobs and leave the workforce because of health problems (Hollenbeck 2015)

- They experience reduced income, employers face reduced profits, and government loses taxes and pays more in disability benefits and health care (Schimmel and Stapleton 2012; Anand and Ben-Shalom 2017; Ben-Shalom and Burak 2016)

Central question

- Which factors affect whether employers provide accommodations to, and ultimately retain, employees with health problems?

Methods

- In-depth interviews with 14 employers in Arkansas

  – 5 referrals from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

  – 8 referrals from a professional society

  – 1 referral from a respondent

- Respondents described cases when employees developed or disclosed health problems

- Identifying details have been anonymized

Sample characteristics

Sample characteristics (n=50 cases)					
Industries		**Health conditions***		**Status at interview**	
Finance/insurance	19	Cancer	7	Stayed at organization	21
Health care/social assistance	14	Musculoskeletal condition	5	Left due to health	11
Manufacturing	12	Sensory impairment	5	Left for other reason	4
Educational services	2	Leg/knee/foot injury	5	Terminated	4
Information	2	Mental/behavioral disorder	3	Status not provided	10
Transportation/warehousing	1	Other	22		

*Does not sum to 50 because respondents could report multiple health conditions.

Findings

Main argument

Societal factors

Employer factors

Employee factors

Employer action
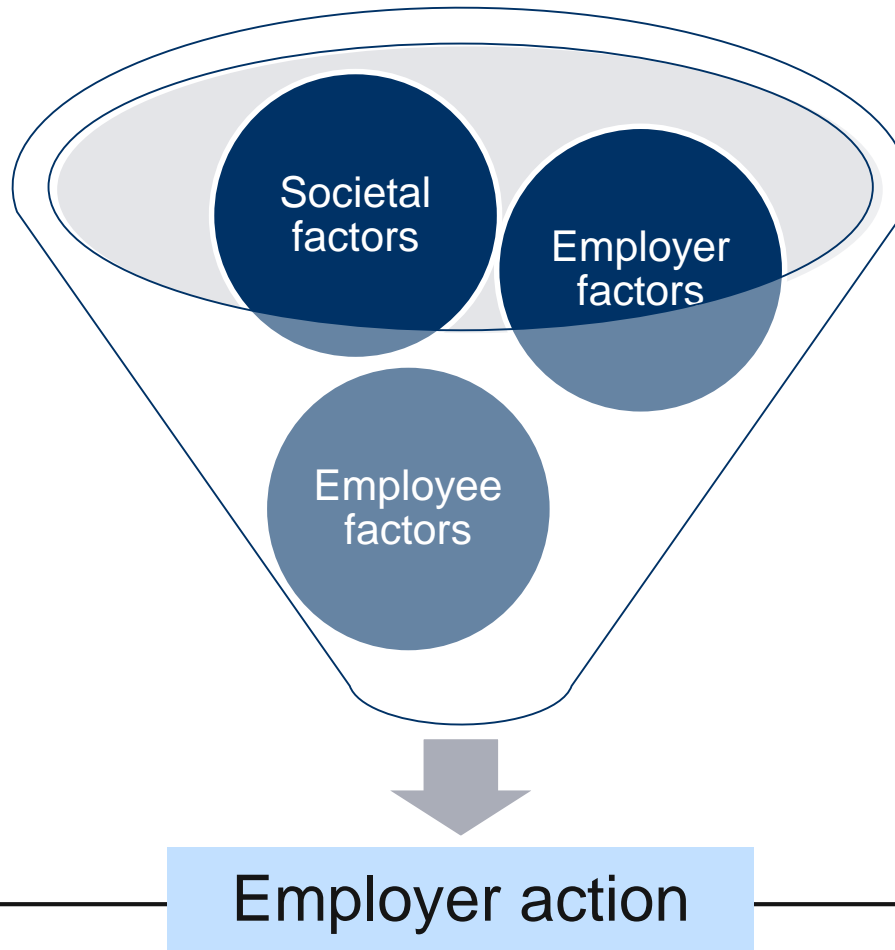
Society-level factors

Employers appreciate public resources

- Employers received valuable information and resources from programs like DOL's Job Accommodation Network and the Arkansas Vocational Rehabilitation Agency's Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work program.

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    "I'm not an expert on hearing. There would be no way that I could even say, 'Oh, we need to get you hearing aids.' I don't have any clue at all."

    --Employers describe experiences with publicly available programs

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Employer-level factors

Ample resources facilitate accommodations

- Financial resources, staff capacity, and other private resources helped employers provide accommodations

  "We probably spent at least a year working [to accommodate] the individual, despite the frustrations, and the hardships, and all the extra manpower that was required."

  --Human resources (HR) director describes efforts to accommodate an employee with a cognitive disability

Communication problems create challenges for employers

- The employer's ability to effectively communicate with

    –

    –

    –

    –

    –

    was a key factor influencing the employer's understanding in what accommodations were needed and how to facilitate retention.

Communication problems create challenges for employers

- The employer's ability to effectively communicate with
  - The employee
  -
  -
  -

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  - The employee
  - HR staff
  -
  -
  -
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    - The employee
    - HR staff
    - Supervisors
    -
    -

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  - HR staff
  - Supervisors
  - Doctors
  - Insurance providers

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Communication problems create challenges for employers

"[The employee] cited that he had an anxiety disorder and he presented documentation [to the HR group] from a health care provider… We had to convey to him the company's position from the standpoint of the expectation for him to be able to do certain things… [We told him] we can't just take certain functions off your plate but we can modify your work hours and maybe modify the number of [supervisees] that you are responsible for…

We engaged with his managers after we discussed the issues with him."

--HR staff member describes successfully orchestrating communication among an employee with an anxiety disorder, the employee's supervisor, and the employee's doctor

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Employee-level factors

Tenure

- Employees who had worked at their organization for four or more years were more likely to be retained than those with shorter tenure.

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"The individual hadn't been with the company very long. That's typically when you're going to see retention not working out [because you don't] feel compelled to have to offer as much as you would someone who put in [more] time with the organization."

– An HR director summarizes her decision not to attempt to accommodate a new employee who developed a back problem shortly after being hired

Work performance

- Employee work performance before onset of a health problem appeared to affect employer efforts to accommodate and retain workers.

- 6 of 14 employers cited good performance as a factor that incentivized them to "make more of an effort" to accommodate employees.

Work performance

"Brand new employee, been here two months. Picking up her twins after school – [when she has a terrible traffic accident resulting in] multiple, multiple surgeries. [Despite this], the employee's manager said, 'I know they don't qualify for FMLA, however, what I've seen in two months is the type of employee I want. Whatever it takes, I want them back.'"

-- HR manager describes how an employee's performance incentivized accommodations

Type of work

- It was more challenging to accommodate and retain workers in physically active roles than those in sedentary roles

  –

Type of work

- It was more challenging to accommodate and retain workers in physically active roles than those in sedentary roles

    – *A director of HR at a health services organization described feeling like her "hands were tied" when a nurse developed a back problem*

Type of health problem

- Musculoskeletal conditions and conditions that could be addressed with ergonomic adjustments described as "low-hanging fruit"

- Mental and behavioral health conditions, terminal illnesses, and health problems that hindered the ability to perform basic activities of daily living were challenging to accommodate.

Type of health problem

"It is almost impossible [to retain employees with mental and behavioral health conditions] because I think they don't expect [their employer] to be acting in their best interest. So when we call to find out how they are doing, they are really suspicious. It is really difficult to get information back."

-- HR professional describes challenges retaining employees with mental and behavioral health conditions

Policy implications

Policy implications

- Bolstering employer resources and improving the flow of information could help employers accommodate employees.

- When early intervention requires employer involvement, take employee characteristics into account.

References

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Acknowledgments and disclaimer

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Institute on Disability

Main objective

Identify the practices used by employers to increase the employment of people with disabilities and the effectiveness of these practices.

Description

- 3,085 supervisors from across the country

- Drawn from Qualtrics Business-to-Business panel

- Subject areas:
  - Recruiting & hiring, onboarding & training, retention & accommodation

- Within each subject area:
  - Processes and practices and their effectiveness
  - Commitment from supervisors and upper management
  - Open-ended question to obtain examples

Company size (number of employees)

Number of employees	n	%
25 – 99	692	22.4
100 – 499	910	29.5
500 – 999	401	13.0
1,000 +	1,082	35.1

Supervisory experience of respondents

How long at employer	
Years	**%**
1 to 5	32
6 to 10	29
11 to 20	24
21 or more	15

How long supervising	
Years	**%**
1 or fewer	13
2 to 5	40
6 to 10	21
11 or more	26

How many supervised	
Number	**%**
1 to 5	36
6 to 10	23
11 to 20	19
21 or more	22

Experience supervising people with disabilities

	%
Experience	51
- Hearing	20
- Vision	9
- Mobility	26
- Cognitive	27
No experience	49

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General experience with disability

	%
Any experience	45
- Own	18
- Someone close	39
Hearing	14
Vision	6
Ambulatory	18
Cognitive	21
No experience	55

Improve corporate culture and practices

Underutilized effective practices seen as feasible

Common practices are effective for many - Universal Design

Upper management's commitment is key to success of employees with disabilities and their supervisors

Commitment of upper management and importance to supervisor

Hiring PWD

Very — 20%

Somewhat — 45%

Not very — 26%

Not at all — 10%

Upper management commitment

NH

Hiring PWD

	Upper management commitment	Importance to supervisor
Very	20%	22%
Somewhat	45%	46%
Not very	26%	24%
Not at all	10%	8%

75

Supporting PWD learn the job

Very — 43%
Somewhat — 40%
Not very — 13%
Not at all — 5%

Upper management commitment
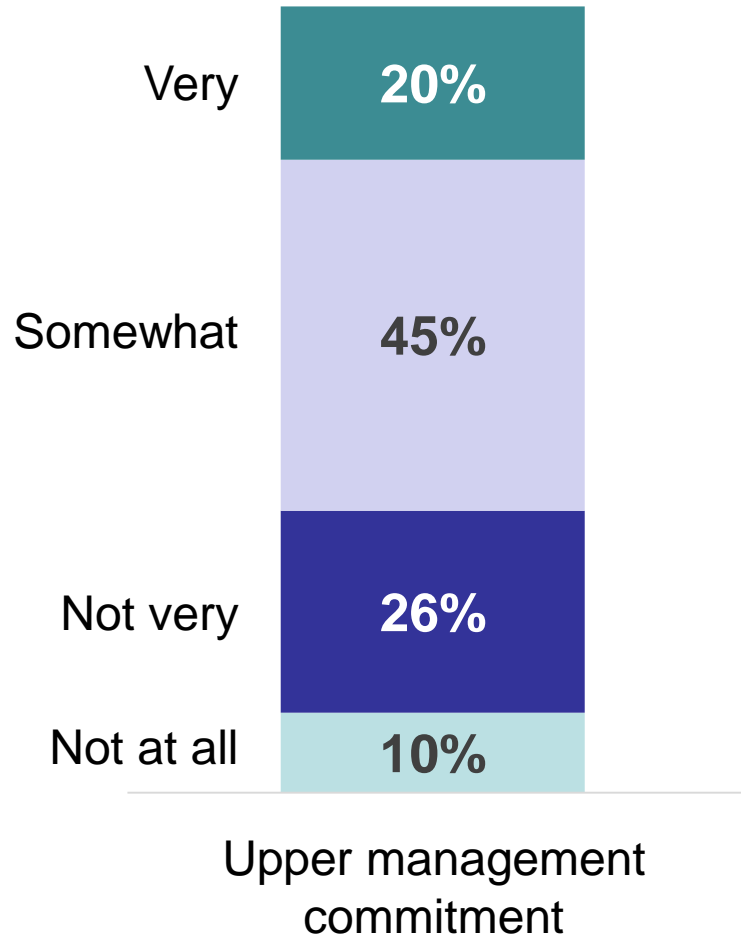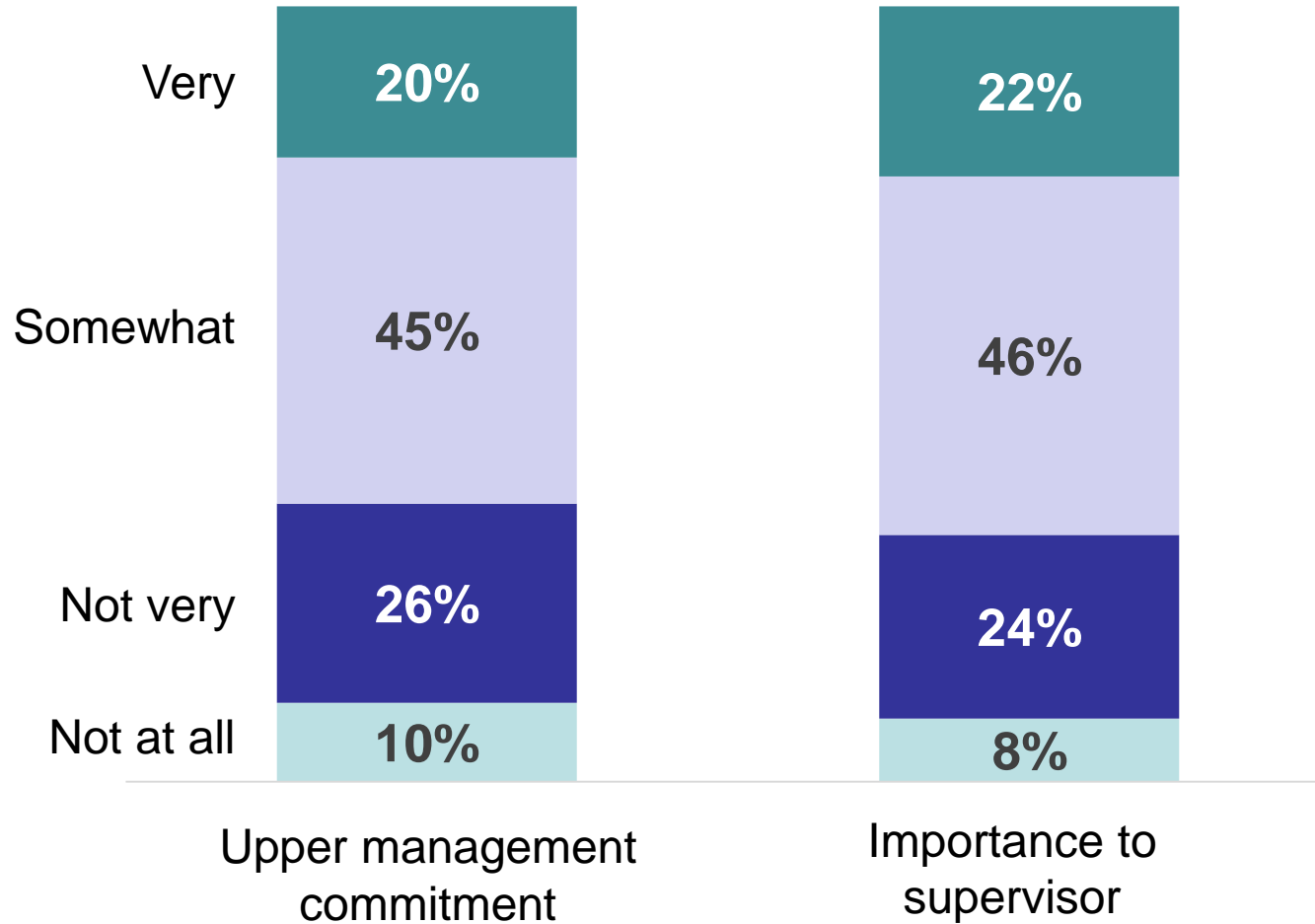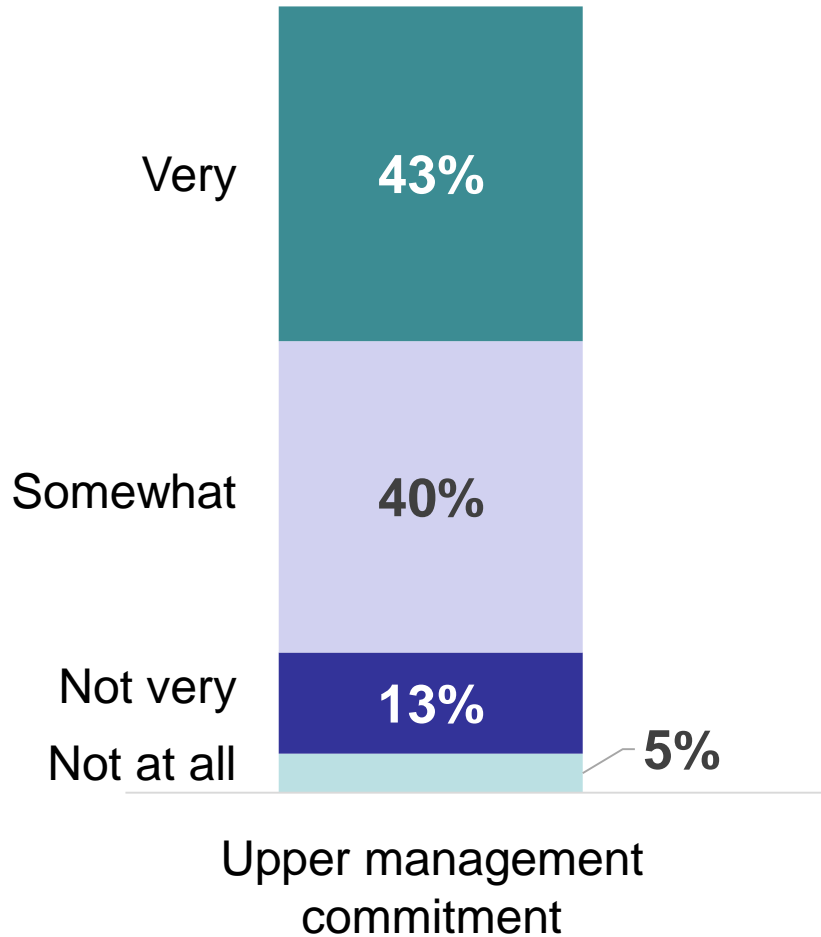
Supporting PWD learn the job

Providing requested accommodations

Very — 47%
Somewhat — 39%
Not very — 10%
Not at all — 4%

Upper management commitment

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78 NH

Providing requested accommodations

Very

Somewhat

Not very

Not at all

47%

39%

10%

4%

66%

28%

4%

2%

Upper management commitment

Importance to supervisor

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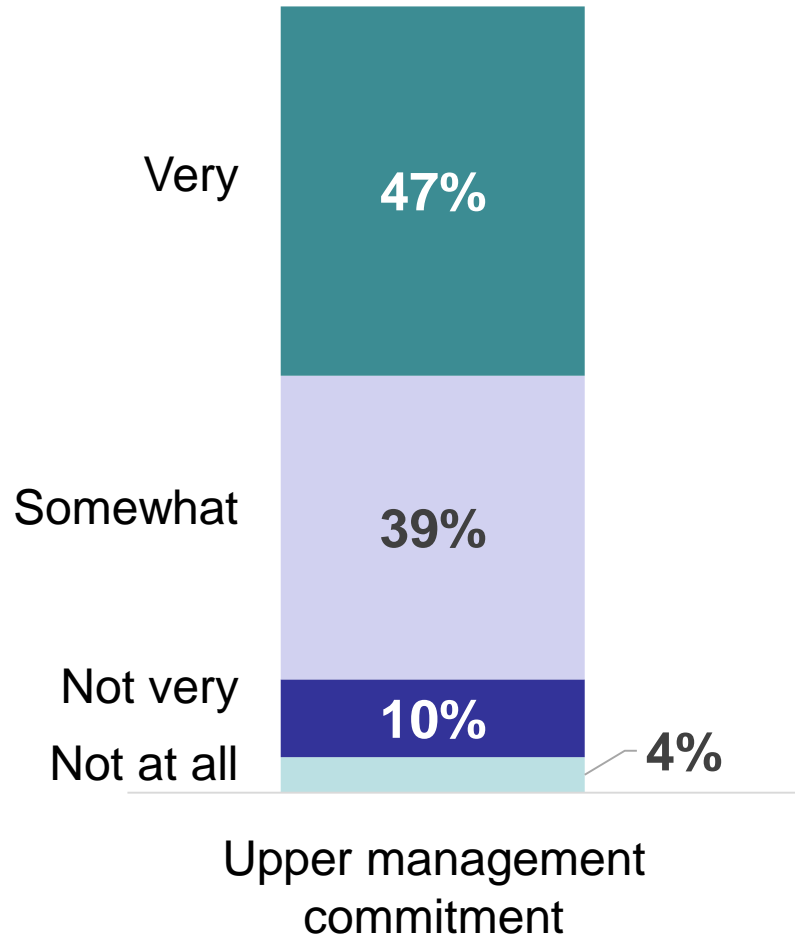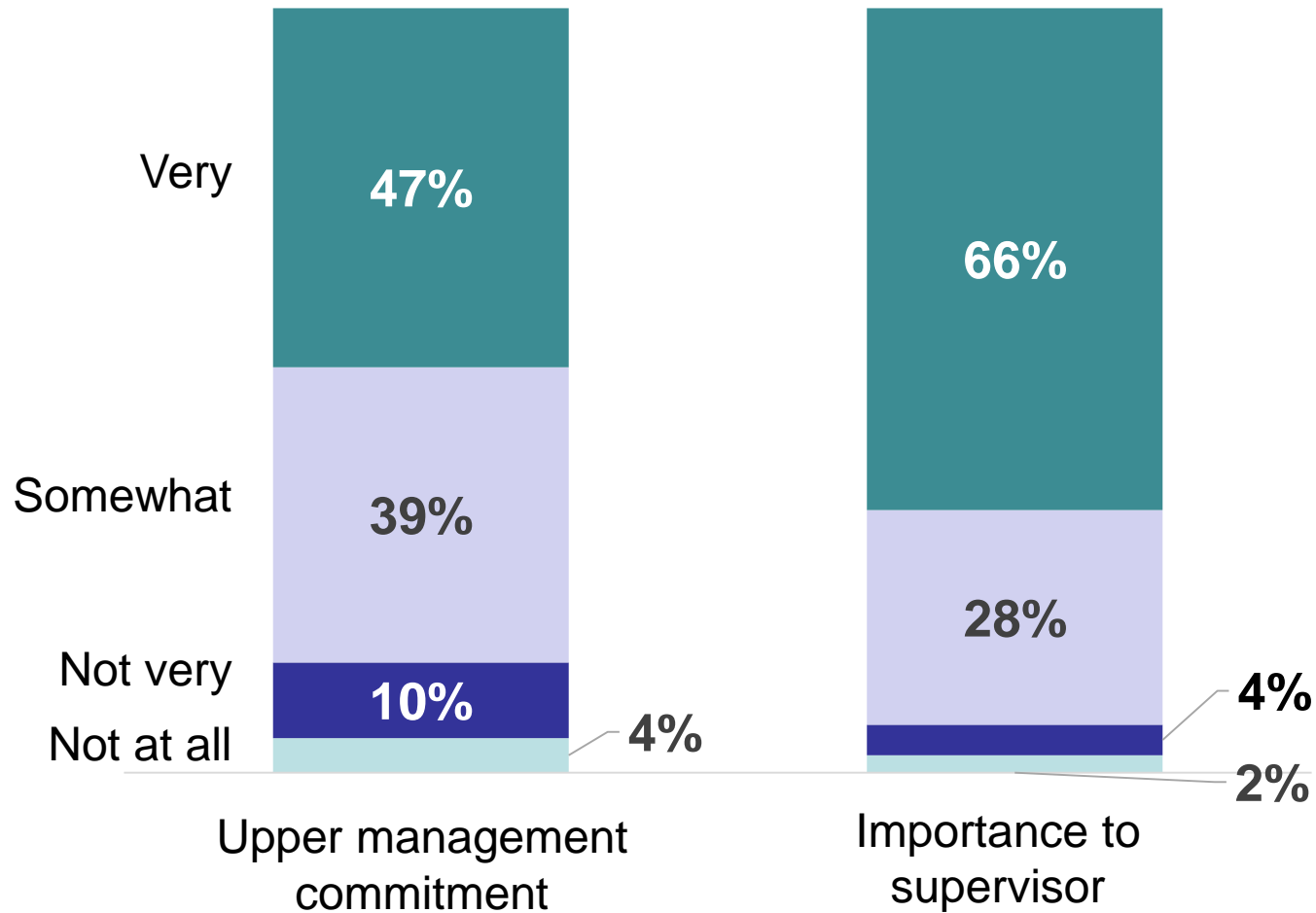
Organizational processes

- Has process?

- Effective?

- As effective for PWD?

Recruiting process
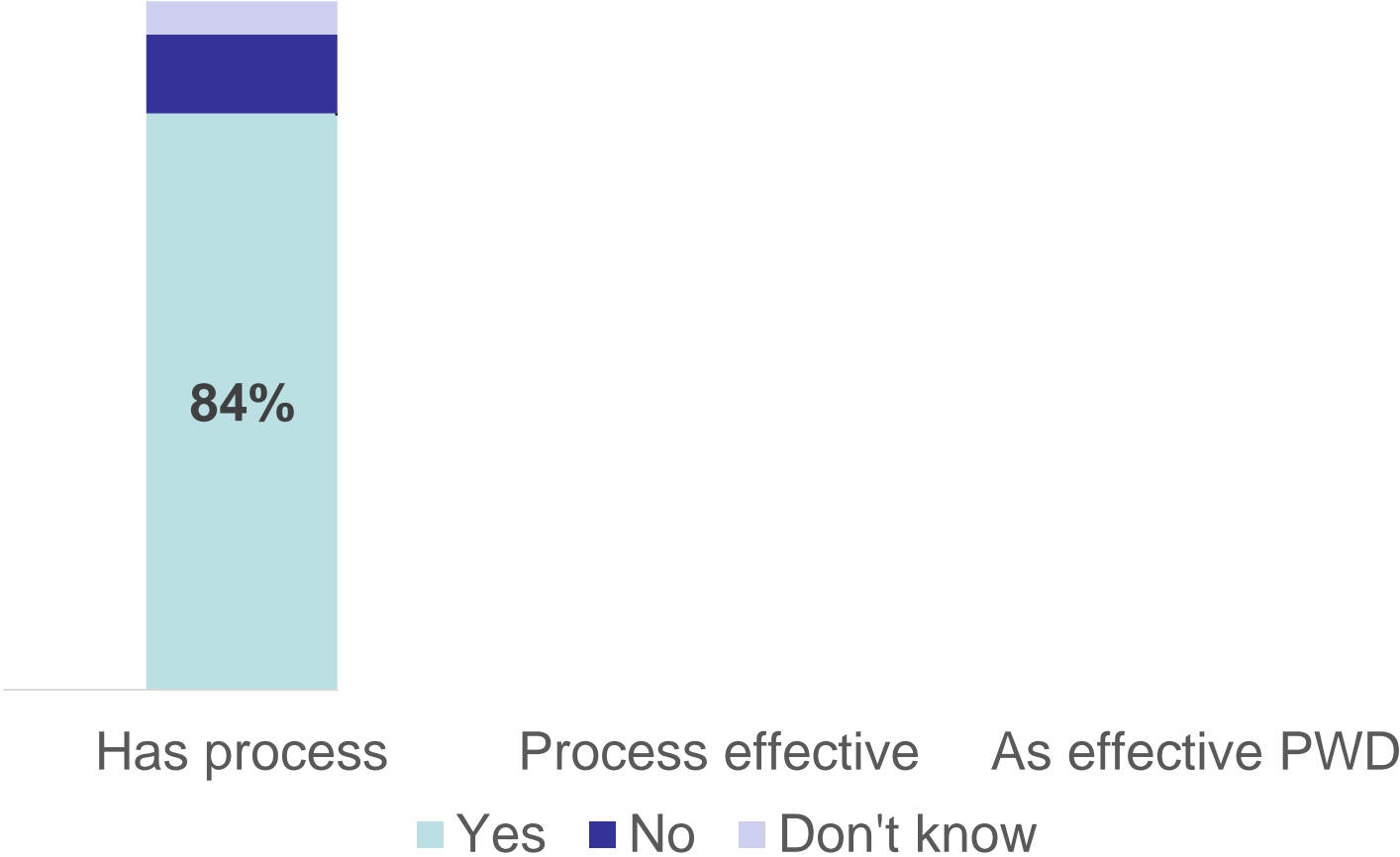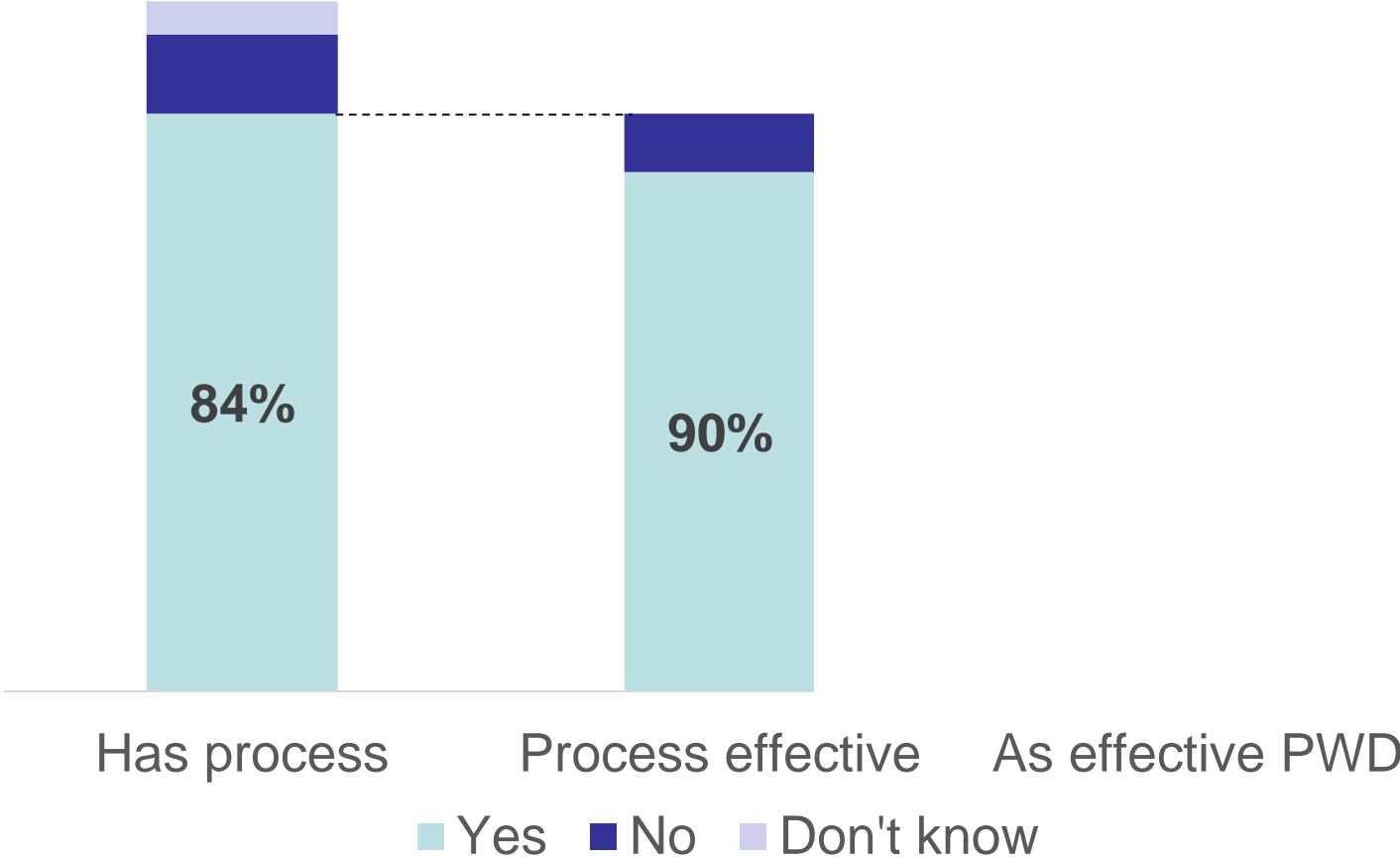
84%

Has process   Process effective   As effective PWD

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

81

Recruiting process

84%

90%

Has process   Process effective   As effective PWD

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Don't know

Recruiting process

Has process — **84%**
Process effective — **90%**
As effective PWD — **61%**

Legend: Yes | No | Don't know

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NH

Organizational hiring goals

Bar chart comparing organizational hiring goals: Diversity 57%, Disability 28%.

Organizational hiring goals

57% — Diversity

12% — Disability as diversity

28% — Disability

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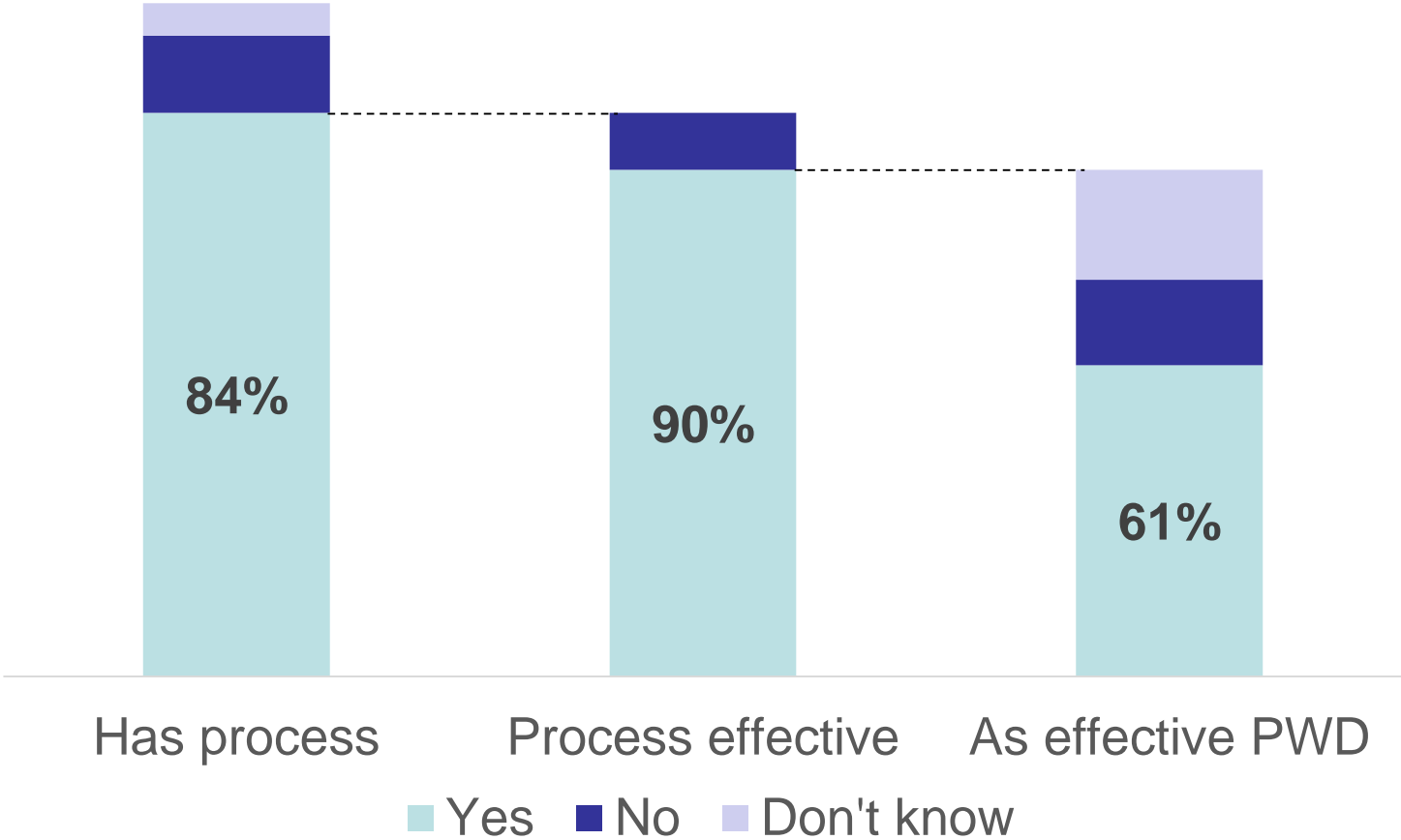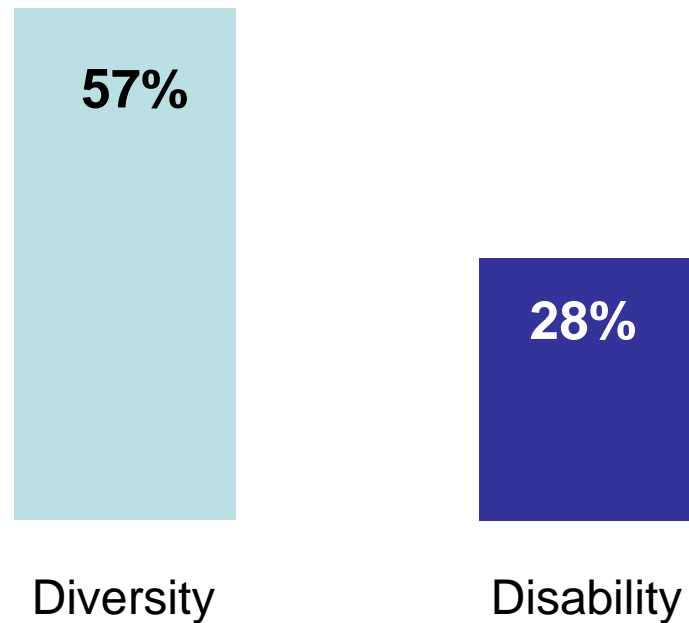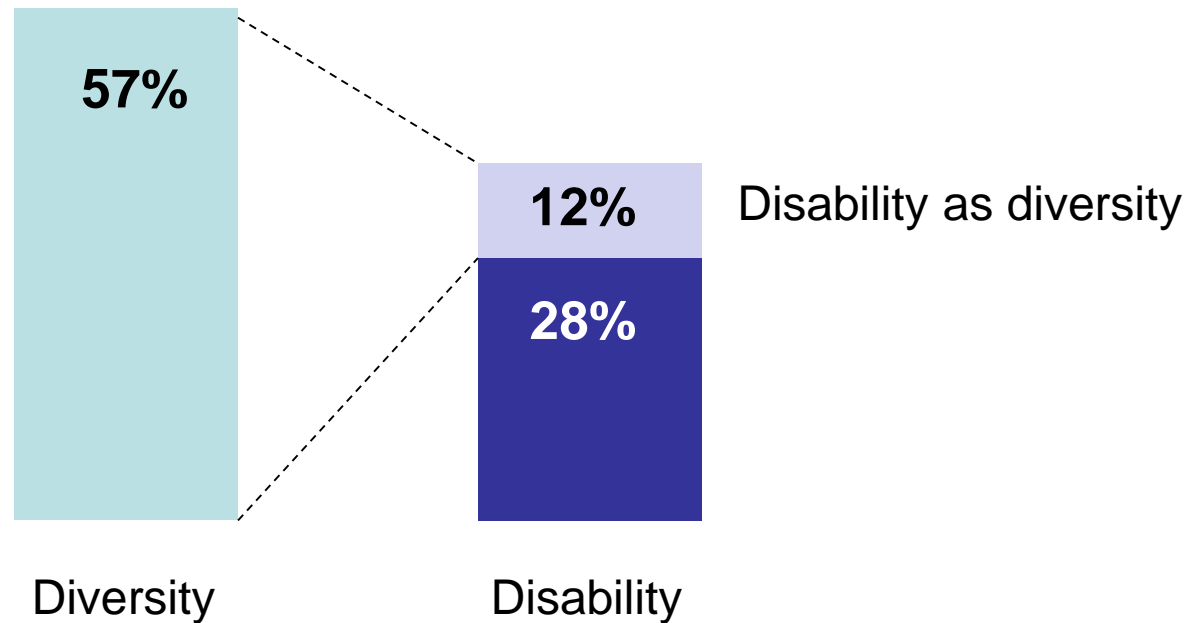
"Moderate" to "a lot" of effort spent on recruiting

Process: Supporting new employees learn job

86%

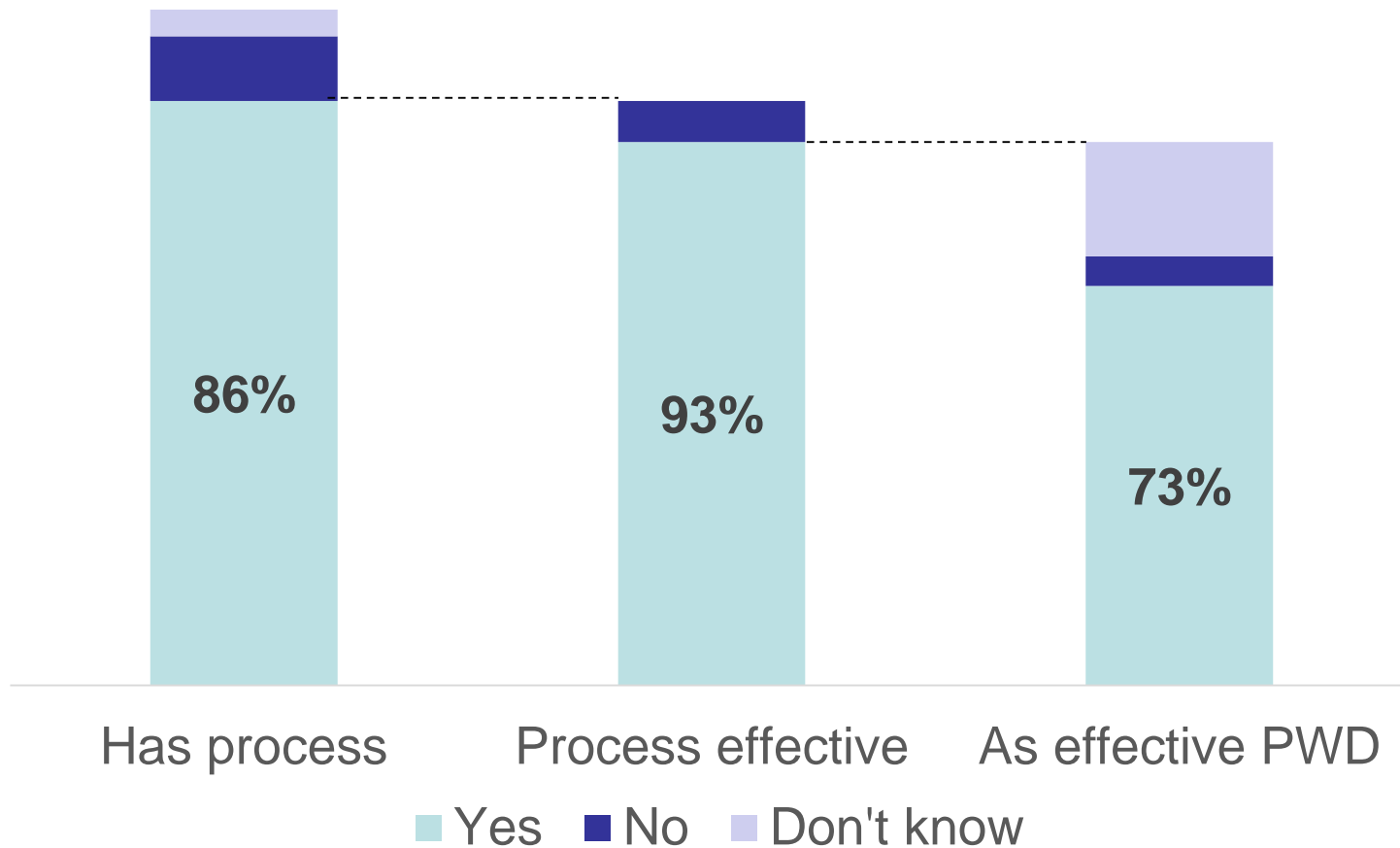Has process   Process effective   As effective PWD
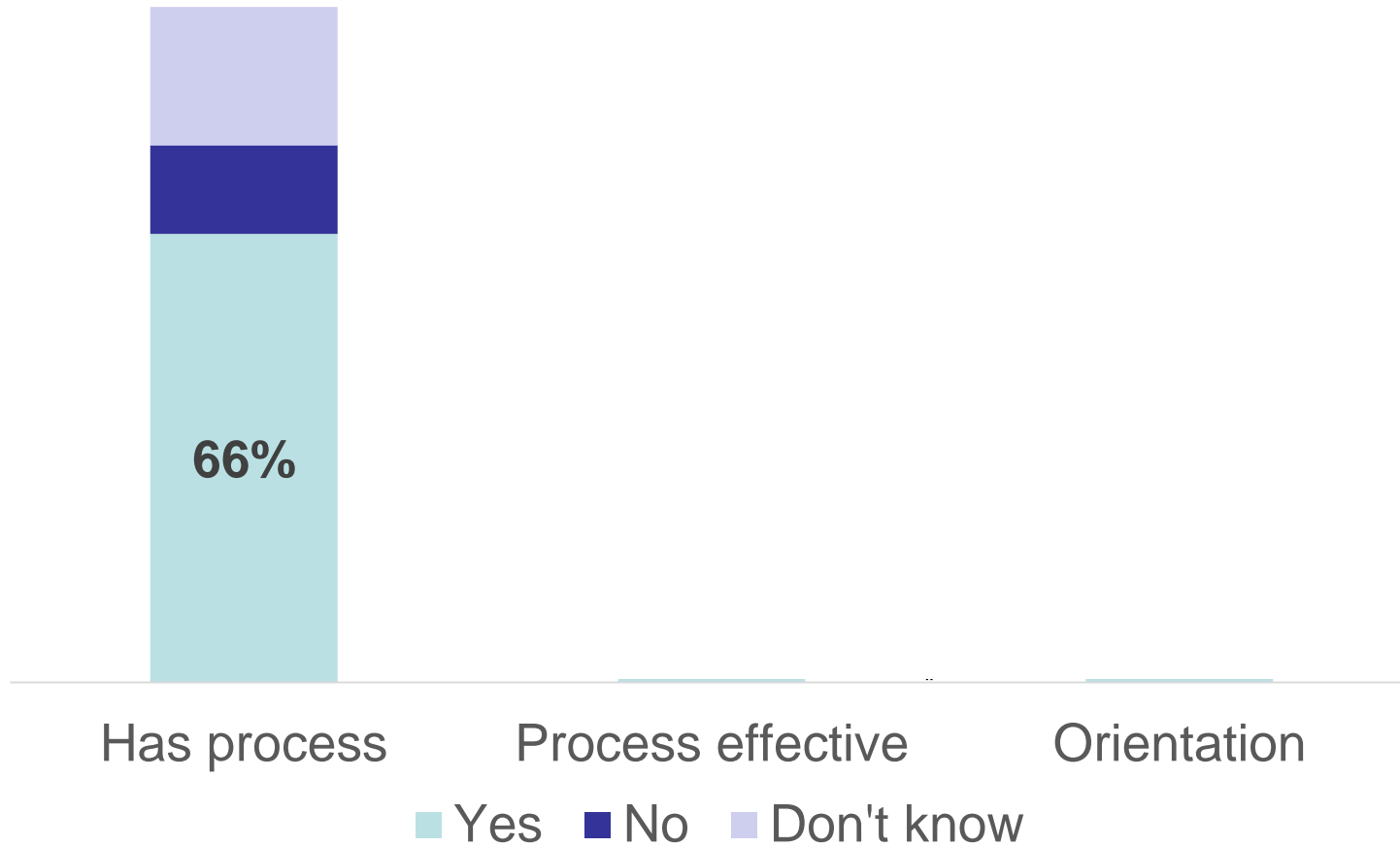
■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

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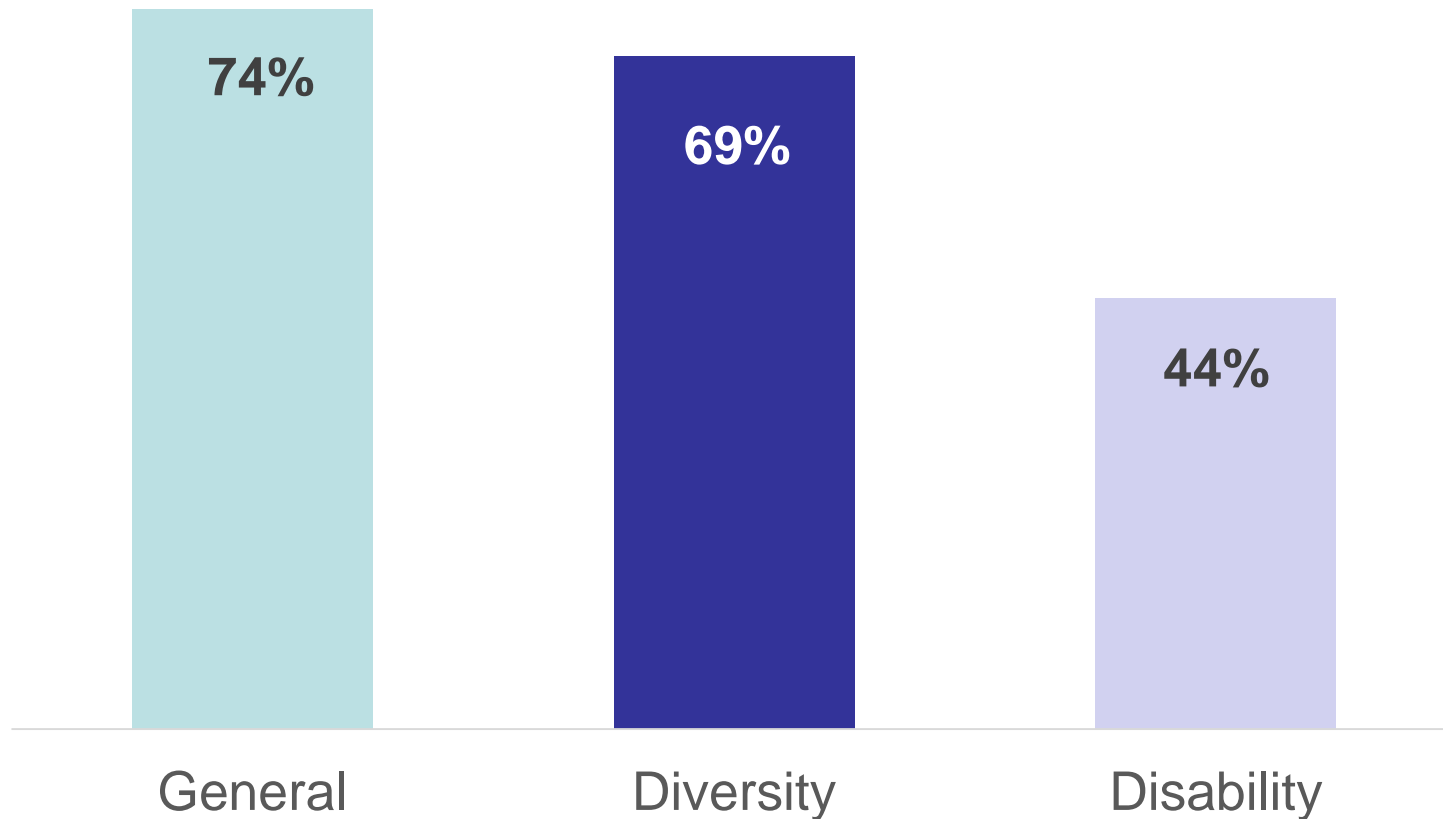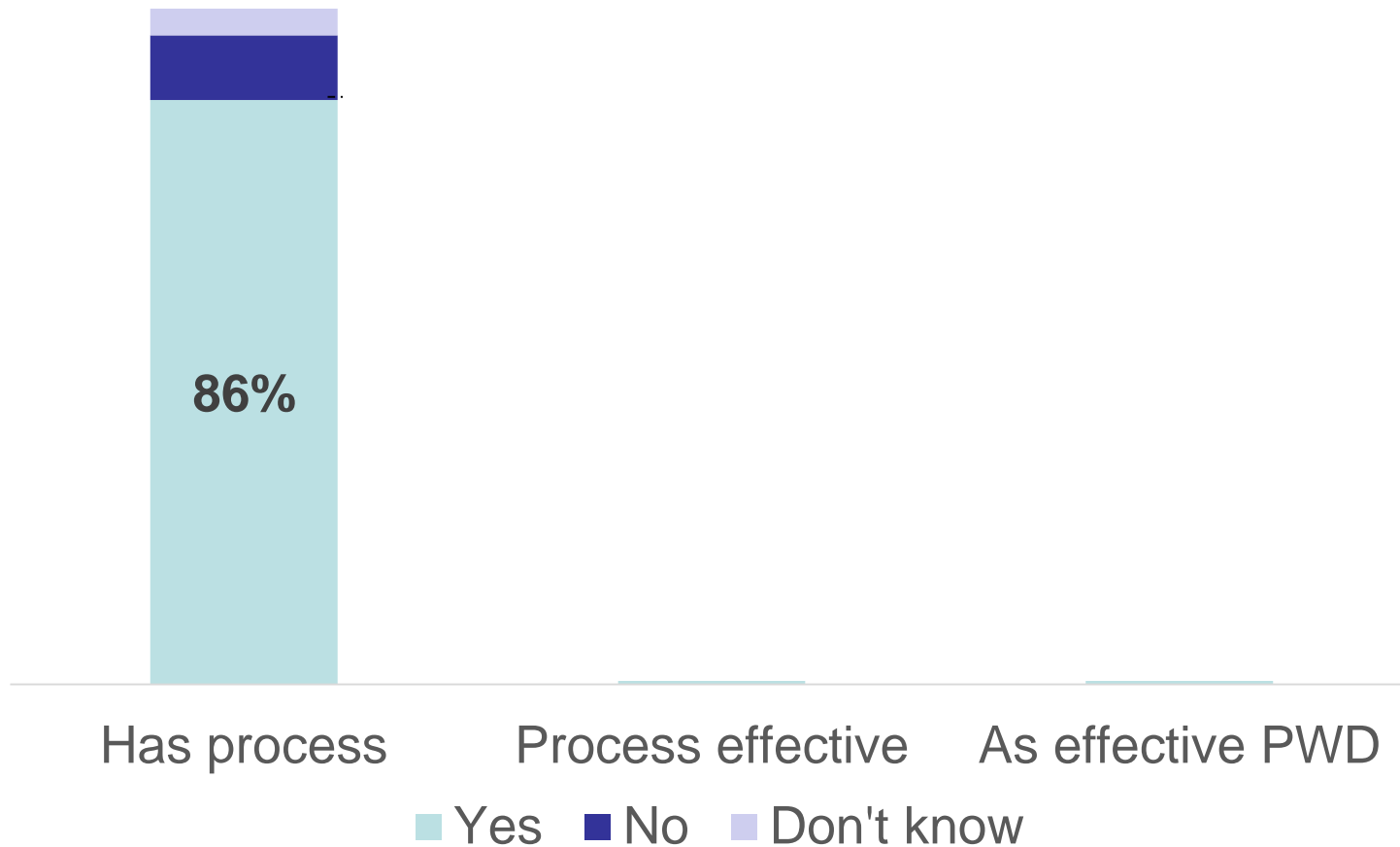
Process: Supporting new employees learn job
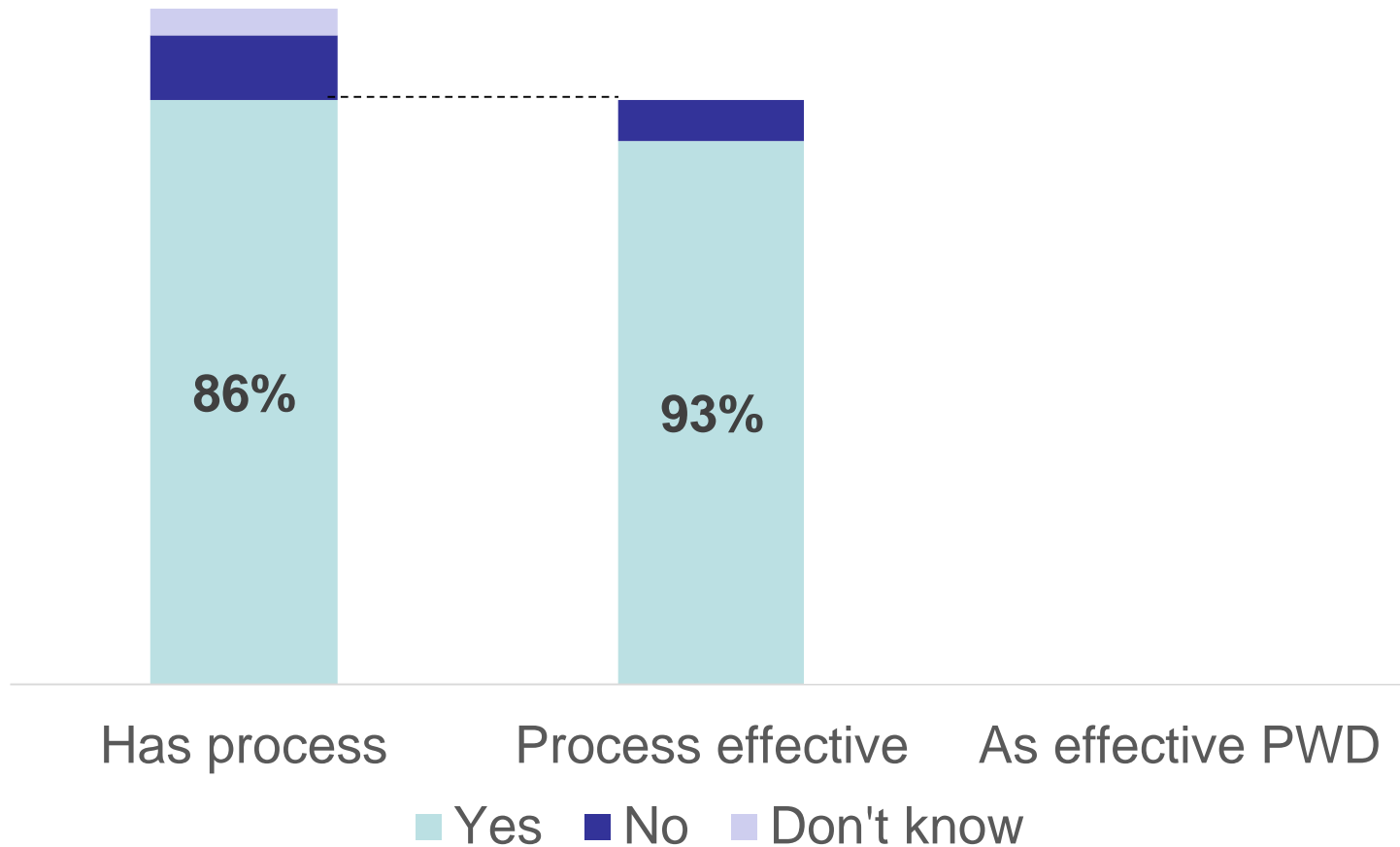
Process: Supporting new employees learn job

Process: Request accommodations

66%

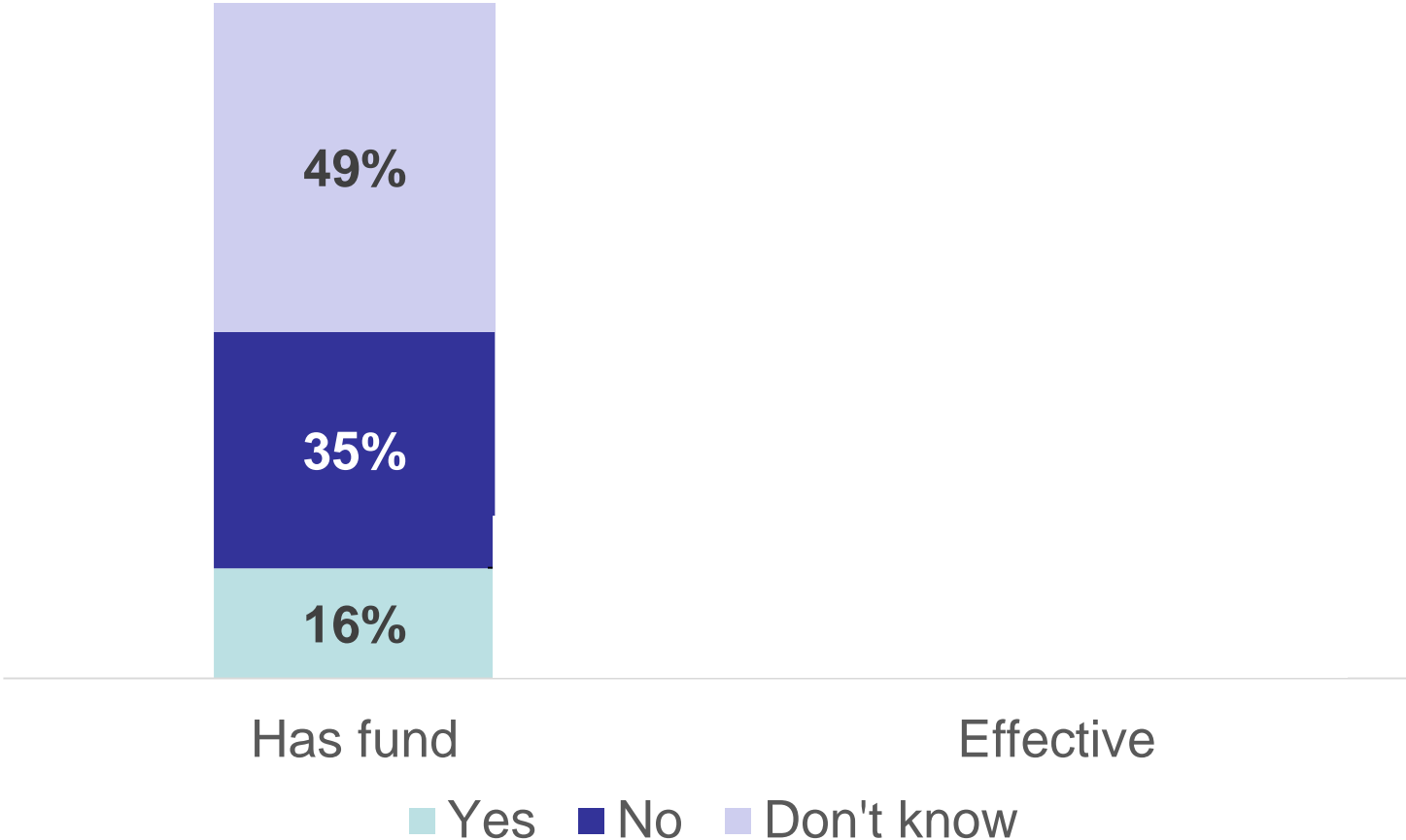Has process   Process effective   Orientation

Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

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Process: Request accommodations

66% 96%

Has process   Process effective   Orientation

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

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91
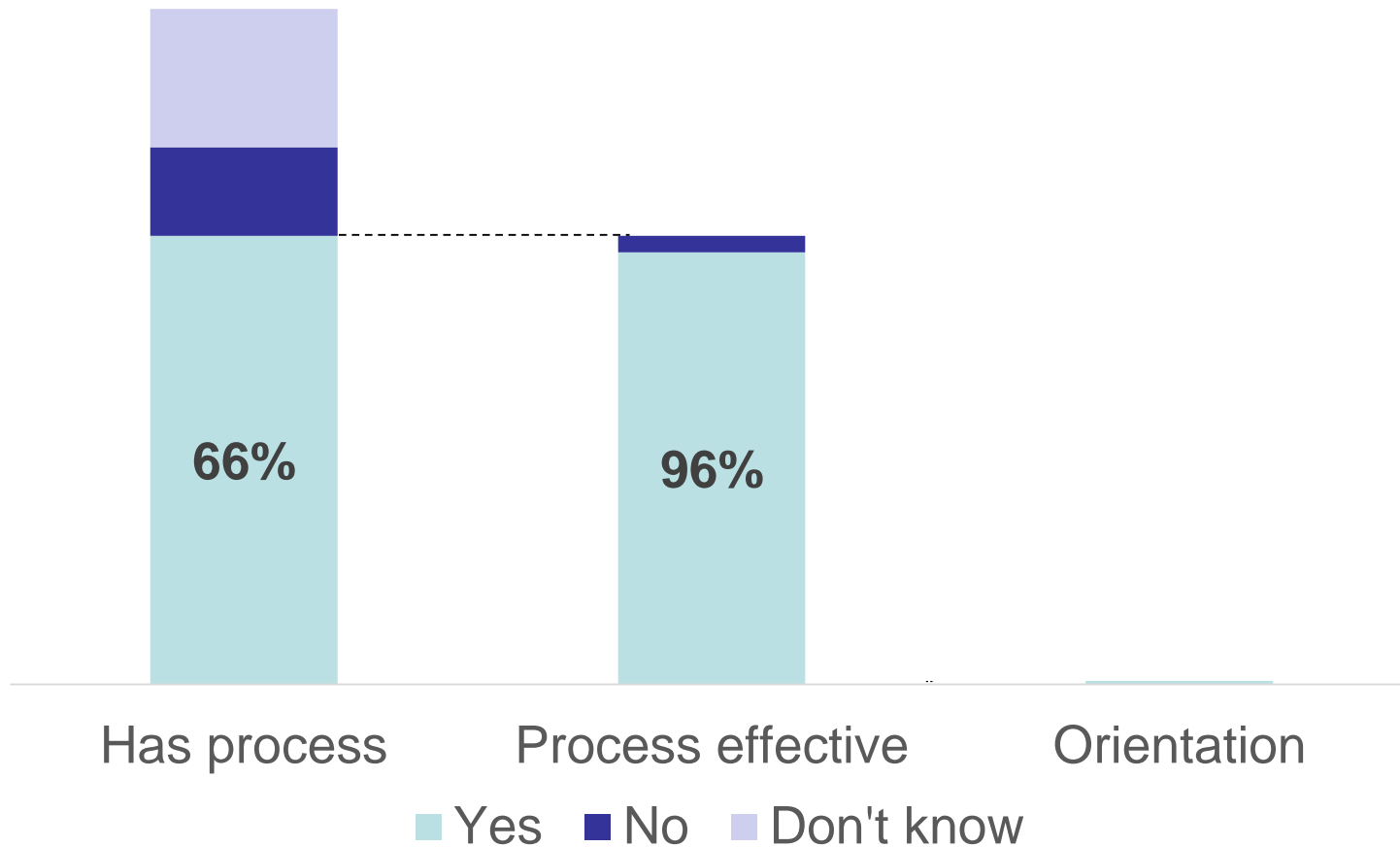
Process: Request accommodations

Centralized accommodation fund

Has fund   Effective

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

93

Centralized accommodation fund

Has fund: Yes 16%, No 35%, Don't know 49%
Effective: 94%

Legend: Yes, No, Don't know

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94

Specific practices

95
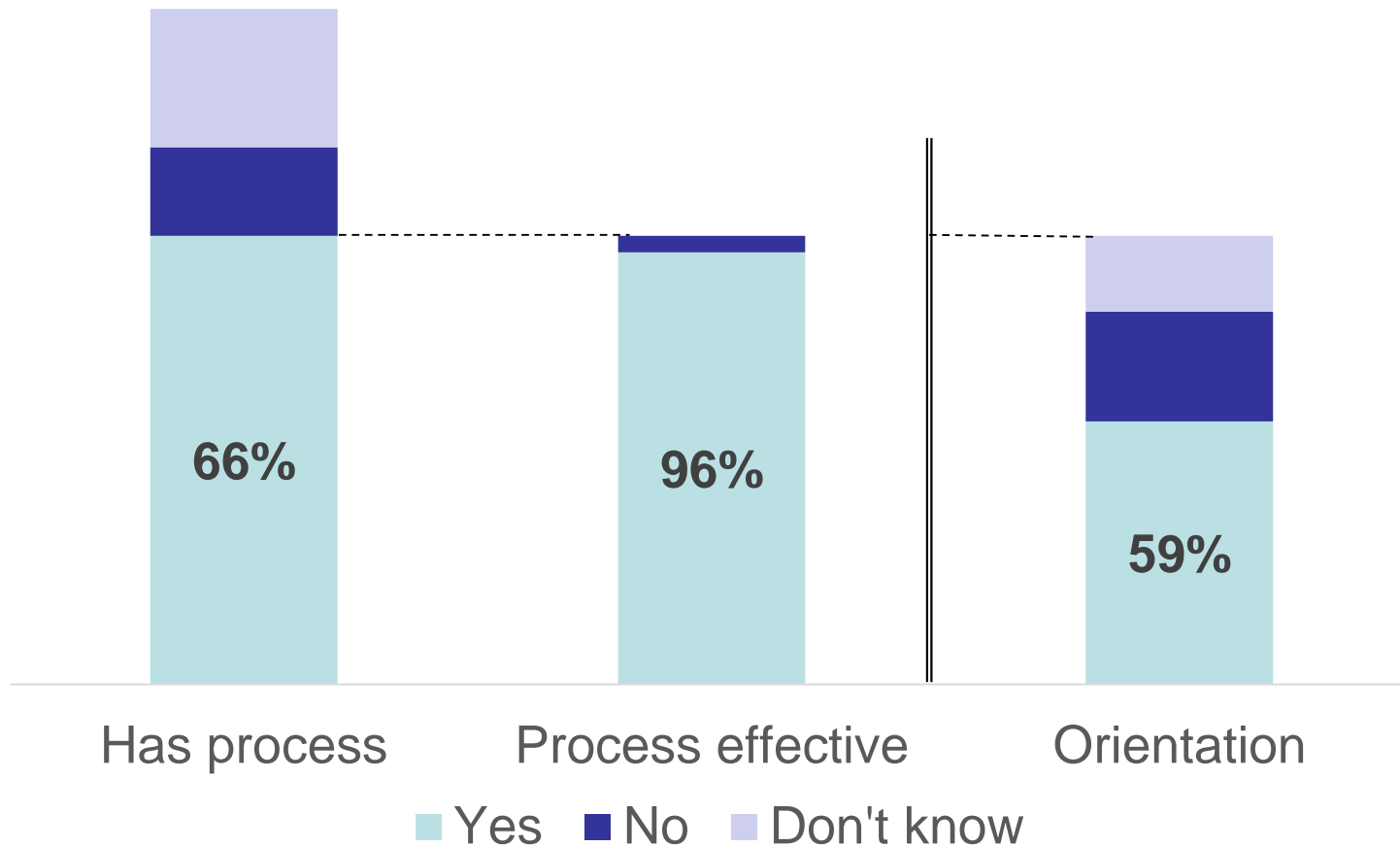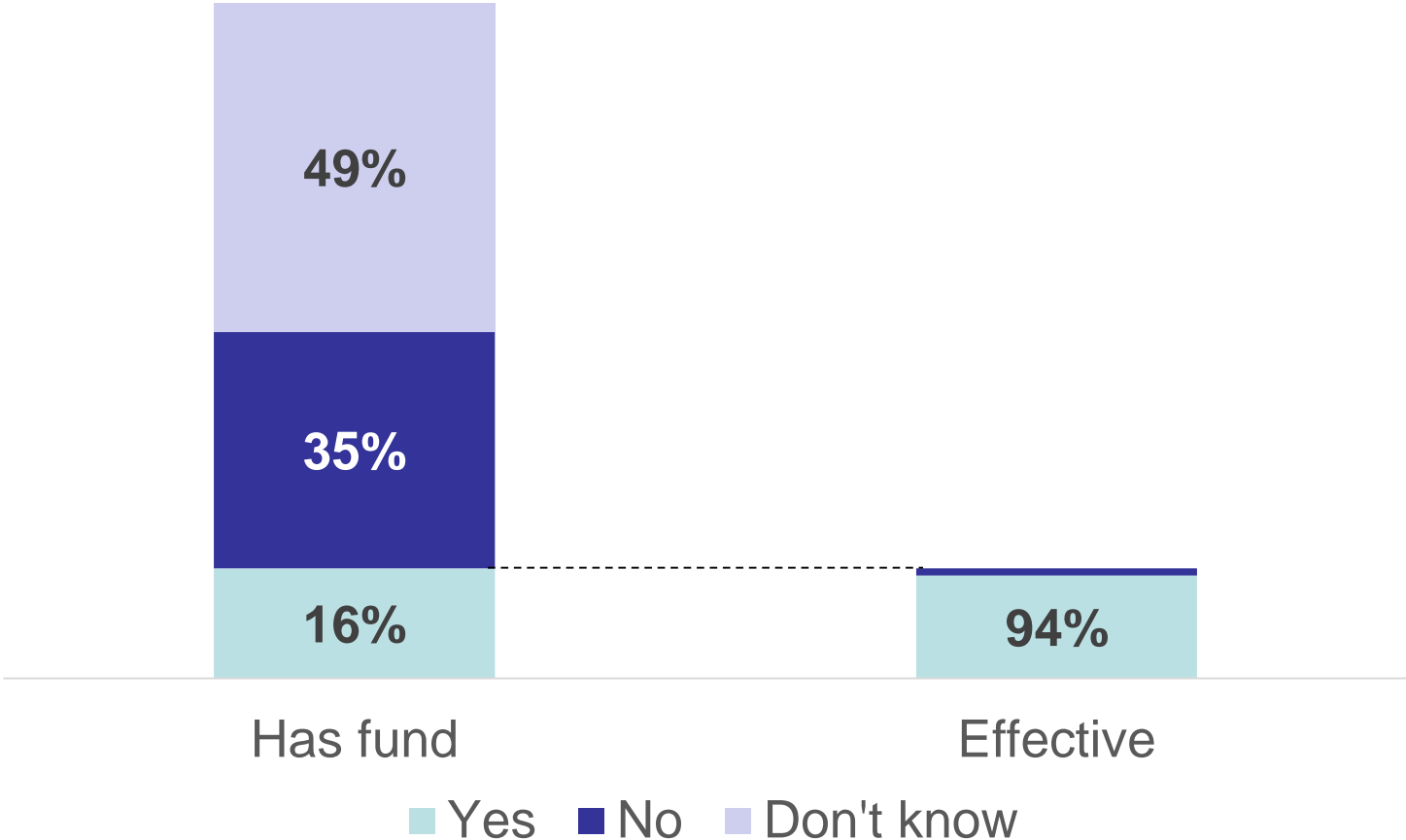
Recruiting: Partner with disability organizations

Uses practice?

Don't know **35%** — Feasible? — **85%**

No **38%** — Feasible? — **66%**

Yes **27%** — Effective? — **95%**
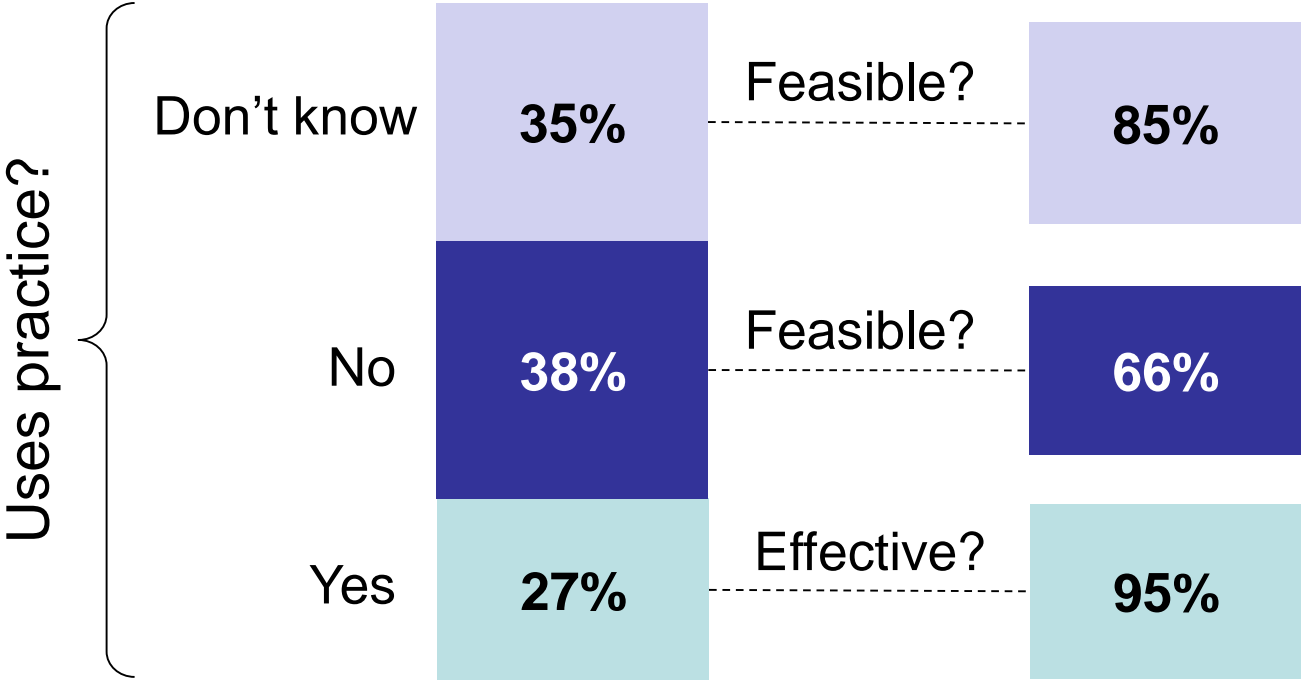
Training practices: Short-term outside assistance

Uses practice?

No — **56%** — Feasible? — **70%**

Sometimes — **25%** — Effective? — **82%** — As effective PWD? — **86%**

Yes — **19%** — Effective? — **89%** — **86%**

97
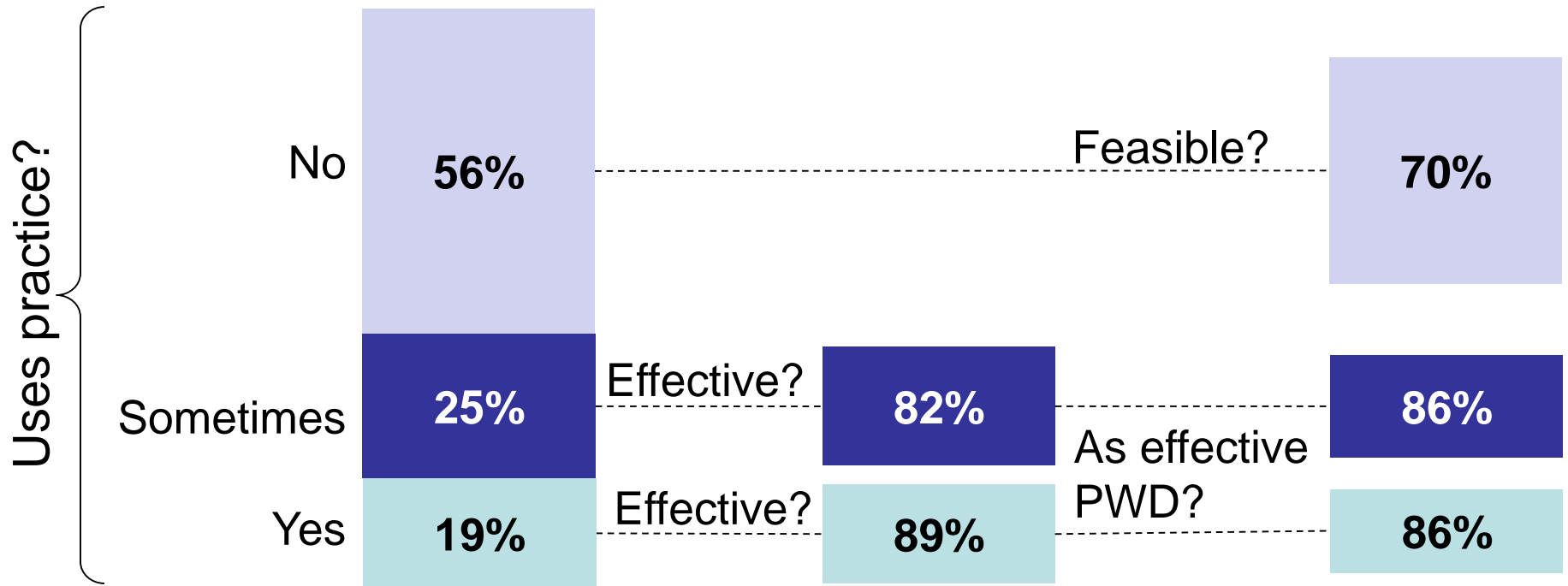
Training practices: Job shadowing

Uses practice?

No — 12%	Feasible?	70%
Sometimes — 27%	Effective? — 93%	As effective PWD? — 75%
Yes — 61%	Effective? — 98%	As effective PWD? — 80%

98 — NH
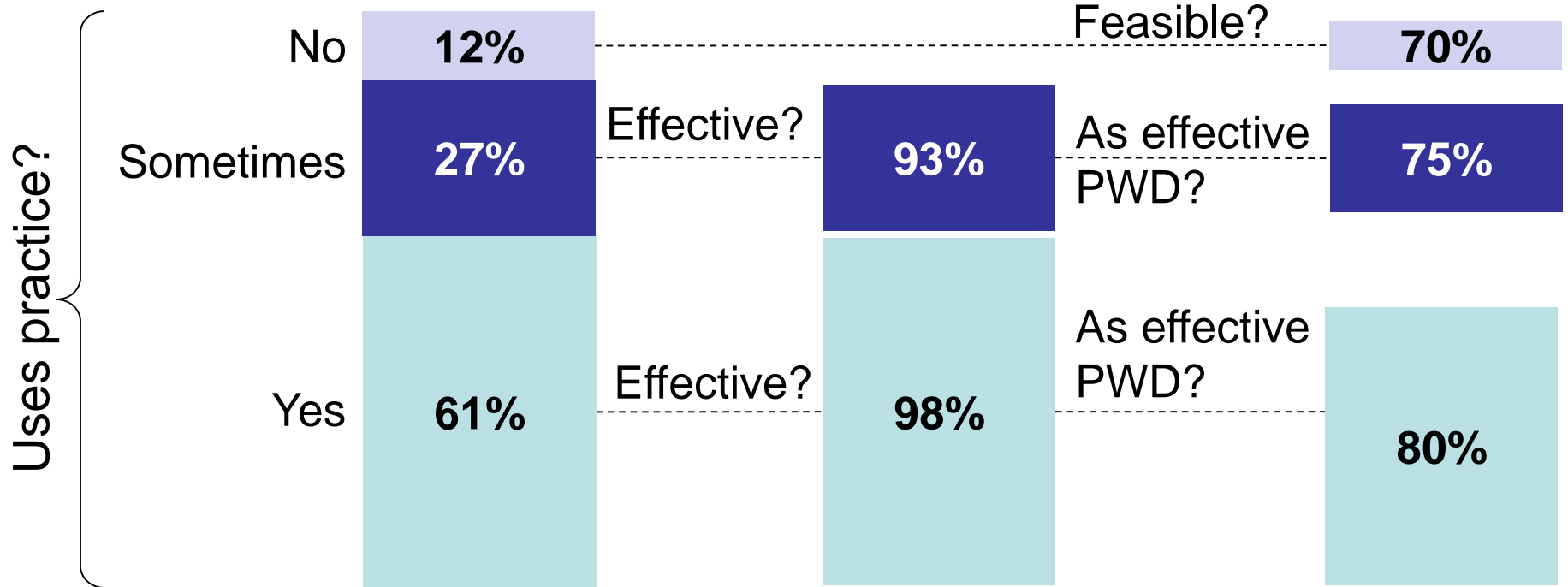
Accommodation practices: Job sharing
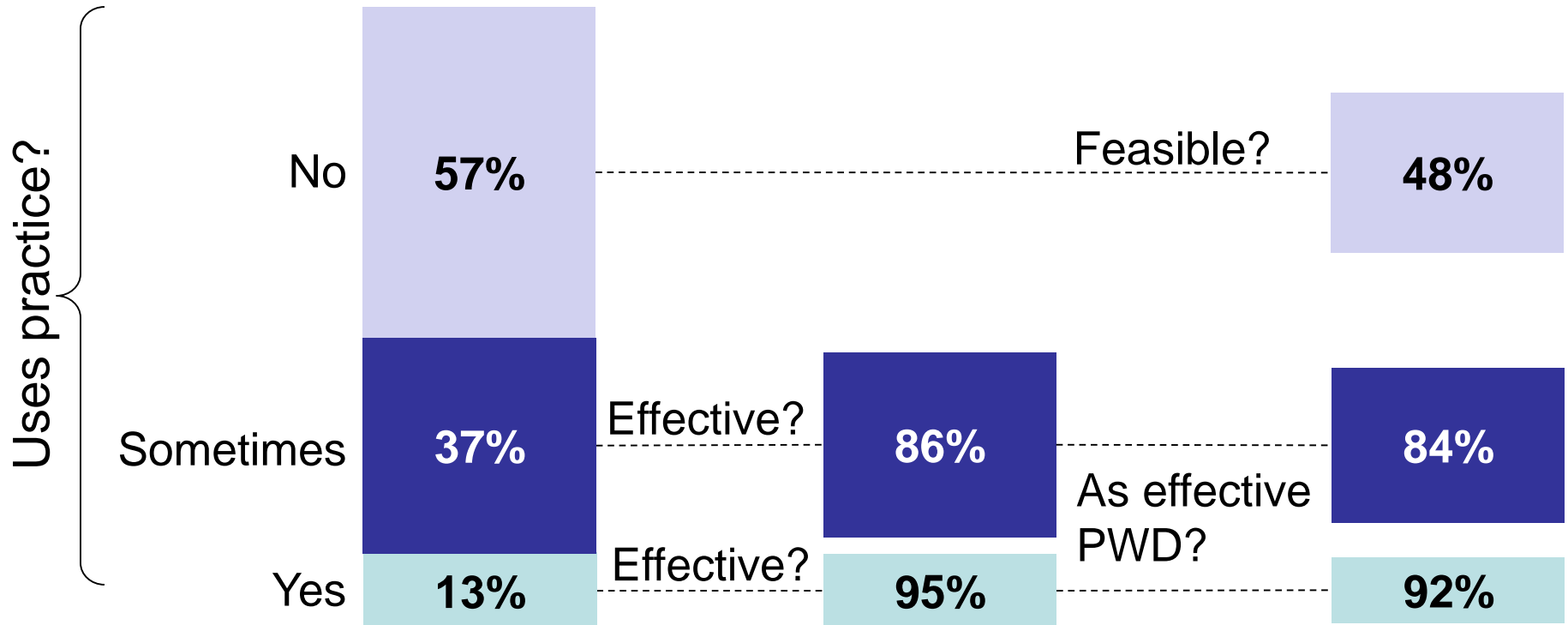
Accommodation practices: work from home (at least some of the time)

Uses practice?

No — **45%** — Feasible? — **21%**

Sometimes — **38%** — Effective? — **74%** — As effective PWD? — **69%**

Yes — **18%** — Effective? — **85%** — **87%**

100

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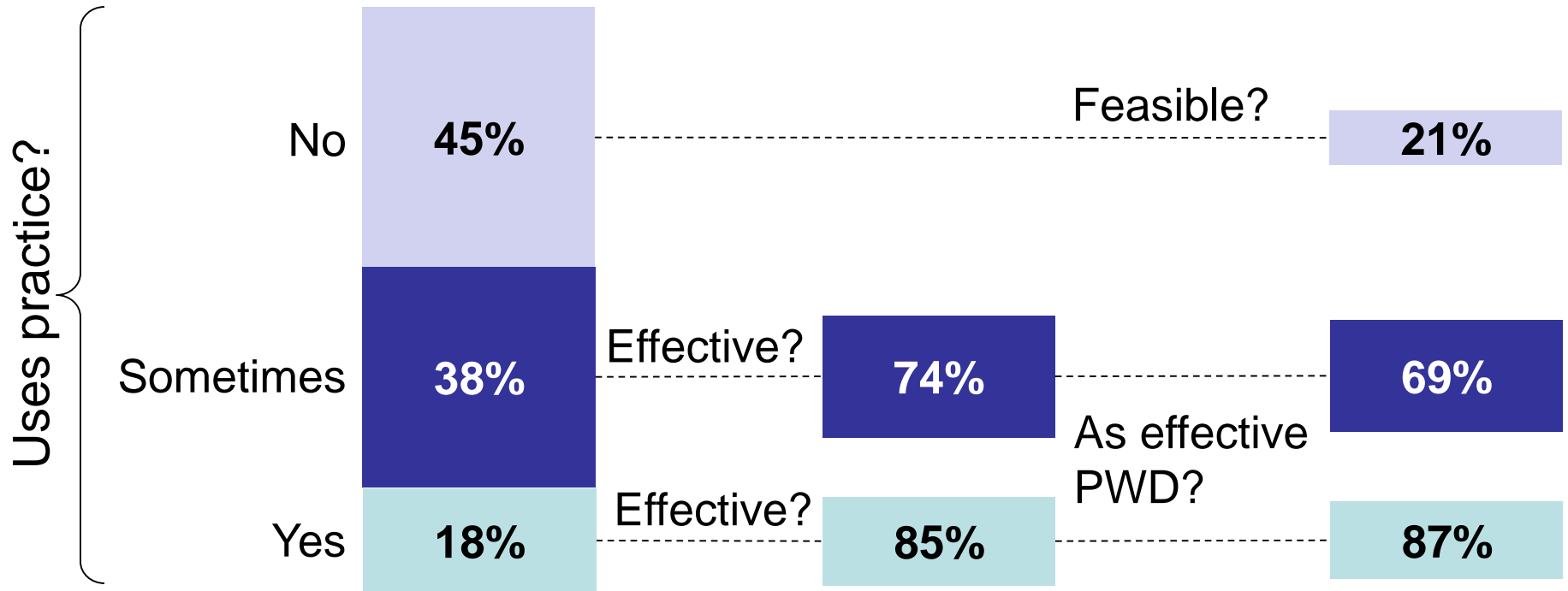
Key takeaways

Commitment/importance

- The importance that supervisors give to hiring PWD mirrors their perceived commitment of senior management to hiring PWD

- Supervisors attach much more importance to supporting PWD learning the job and providing accommodations than they believe that upper management is committed to doing the same

Effective processes

- Most employers have recruiting and training processes
  - Most believe they are as effective for PWD

- Many (66%) employers have accommodation processes
  - Nearly all believe they are effective
  - Support needed for 34% that don't have them

Specific practices

- The findings suggest some opportunities:
  - Practices that few employers use
  - When used, they are effective
  - When not used, they are feasible

- In particular:
  - Partnering with disability organization in recruiting
  - Short-term outside training assist. (e.g., job coach)
  - Job sharing

Thank You

Workplace Accommodations: Implications for Public Policy

Alan McClain, Commissioner

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

Arkansas Department of
Career Education
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

Audience Q&A

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