

2012 MSAC Employment Survey Results – Snapshot

This is a snapshot of the results. Please see the full report for all the details.

Who participated in the survey?

A total of 414 people with MS took part in the survey: 21% were men and 79% were women. All were 18 years or older and most were 26–65 years of age.

- Most respondents (78%) lived in Victoria
 - 8% NSW
 - 2% ACT
 - 10% other parts of Australia
 - 1% did not currently live in Australia
- People lived in a variety of areas:
 - 59% in a capital city
 - 20% in a major regional centre
 - 15% in a smaller town
 - 6% in a rural or remote area
- Most respondents (76%) had relapsing remitting MS
 - 10% secondary progressive MS
 - 8% primary progressive MS
 - 6% were unsure or had another type of MS
- MS duration varied:
 - 45% diagnosed in the last 5 years
 - 1% diagnosed prior to 1980
- Most people had relatively good mobility, with almost half having no visible walking problem and fewer than 3% using a wheelchair or scooter all the time
- Respondents were highly educated. More than 50% had completed a tertiary degree

Employment information

People currently in paid employment

- 63.5% were in paid employment
- Physical demands of the work varied:
 - 60% mainly sedentary work
 - 29% mixed sedentary and relatively physically demanding work
 - 9% highly physically demanding work
- 48% of respondents worked 30 or fewer hours in an average week
- MS had affected many people's work:
 - 49% had reduced their work hours due to MS symptoms
 - 36% had changed their type of work due to MS symptoms
 - 23% had changed both their type and amount of work due to MS symptoms

People NOT currently in paid employment

- 36% were not in paid employment, but most had previously been in paid employment
- 68% said MS was a factor in their leaving paid employment
- 45% stated that MS was the *primary* reason for leaving paid employment

- Most were not seeking paid employment. The reasons given were:
 - Can't work due to MS (39%)
 - Financially secure (16%)
 - Given up finding work (10%)
 - Other (35%)

Factors associated with being in paid employment

Among the personal details collected in this survey, some were associated with being currently employed:

- Being aged 55 years or younger
- Having a visibly normal gait
- Having a university degree
- Living in a capital city

Knowledge and experience of Disability Employment Services (DESs)

Fewer than half of people currently working or seeking paid employment had heard of a DES. Only one in five had ever visited a DES, and in most cases, they had done so within the last 12 months.

Views of people who had visited a DES

- Most had a positive experience and stated they would recommend the service

- People who were in paid employment when they visited the DES reported a more positive outcome and were more likely to recommend the service than were people who were not employed when they visited

- The three services people were least likely to feel they had obtained from the DES were:
 - Advice regarding superannuation or leaving employment
 - Assistance in improving job-seeking skills (e.g. CV writing, interview skills)
 - Creative assistance in negotiating flexible working conditions suitable to their needs

- Most people judged "Assistance negotiating flexible working conditions" as one of the most valuable services a DES could offer

Views of people who had never visited a DES

- Two thirds of people said they would consider visiting a DES, including 100 who had not previously been aware of these services

- Like people who had visited a DES, these people considered "Assistance with negotiating flexible working conditions" to be one of the most valuable services a DES could offer

Conclusions

1. In this survey, being currently in paid employment was associated with younger age, better mobility, having a university education and living in a capital city.
2. Most people who were not currently employed had been in paid work in the past.
3. Many people who were not currently employed were not seeking paid work, often because their MS symptoms prevented them from working.
4. Fewer than half of the survey respondents had heard of a DES, but many stated they would consider visiting a DES, now that they knew they existed.
5. Although only a small proportion of people with MS who were employed or seeking employment had visited a DES, most of those who had used one of these services found it to be valuable.
6. The experience of visiting a DES was most useful to those who were employed at the time they used the service.
7. The service rated most valuable by people with MS, whether or not they had visited a DES, was assistance with negotiating flexible working conditions. Those who had used a DES often felt this was not done optimally.

Based on these findings, we recommend that DES awareness needs to be improved among people living with MS. This is a particular priority among those who are currently employed. Negotiating flexible working conditions is an area where DESs may be able to improve their service provision to better meet the needs of people with MS.