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ADA Accommodation Practices in U.S. Workplaces

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Introduction

Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a longstanding legal obligation for U.S. employers, but the way organizations administer ADA requirements has evolved substantially in recent years. What was once treated primarily as a risk management function has matured into a broader strategic imperative, intersecting with talent acquisition, workforce equity, employee productivity, and organizational reputation. As the workforce becomes more diverse and disability disclosure rates rise, employers face increasing pressure to move from minimal compliance to proactive inclusion.

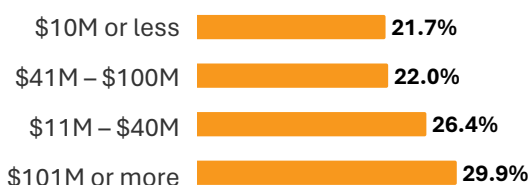
The business case for effective ADA administration is real. Employees with well-supported accommodations are more likely to remain engaged and productive; organizations that pursue disability-inclusive hiring expand their talent pipeline; and the cost of poor administration — whether measured in legal exposure, turnover, or lost productivity — is substantial. Despite this, many employers continue to navigate ADA compliance without standardized processes, specialized technology, or dedicated expertise.

This report addresses the current state of ADA accommodation practices among U.S. employers by analyzing survey data from HR decision-makers across industries and organizational sizes. It examines the types of accommodations being made, how organizations administer ADA claims, the challenges they face, and how they plan to evolve their programs.

Methodology and Sample

IBI surveyed 254 HR decision-makers about their organizations' ADA accommodation practices. The survey examined accommodation types, administrative approaches, technology use, decision timelines, organizational challenges, and future plans. The sample was distributed across role levels, company sizes, revenue tiers, and industries.

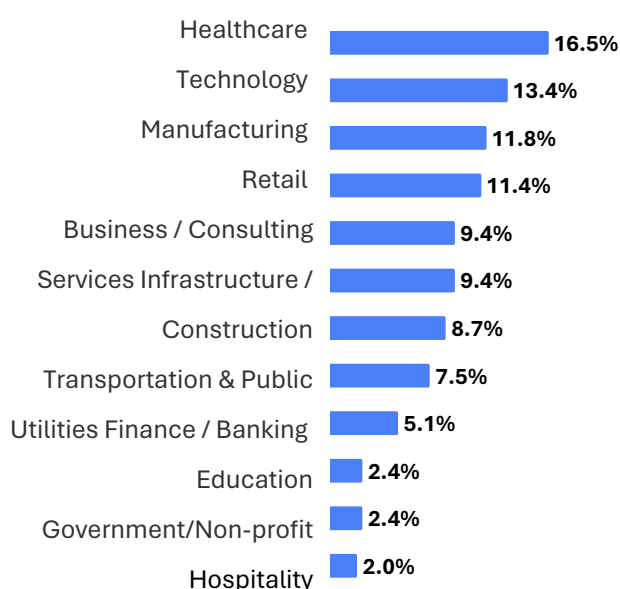
Annual Revenue



Company Size



Industry



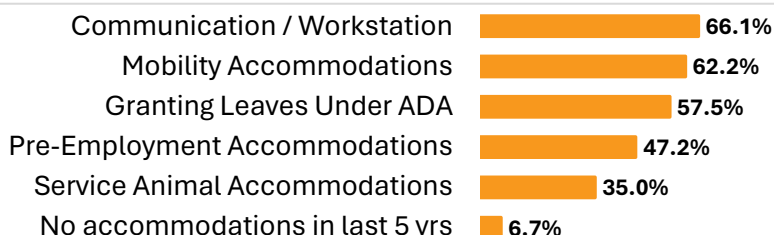
Results

ADA Accommodation Prevalence

The majority of surveyed organizations (93.3%) implemented at least one type of ADA accommodation in the past five years; only 6.7% reported none. Communication and workstation accommodations are the most prevalent (66.1%), followed by mobility accommodations (62.2%) and granting leaves under ADA provisions (57.5%). Pre-employment accommodations are also widely implemented (47.2%), reflecting organizational attention to inclusive hiring.

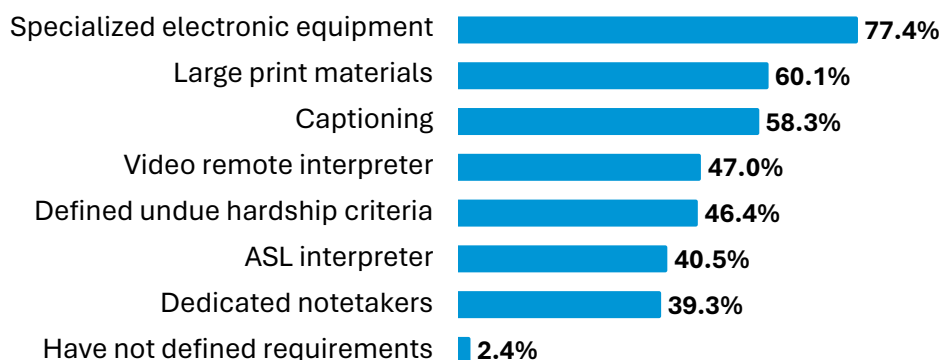
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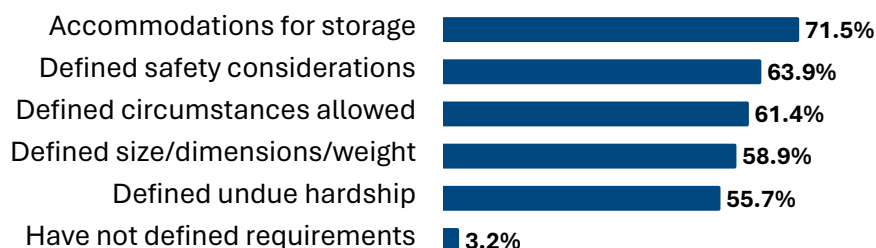
Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple.

Among employers offering **communication accommodations** (n=168), specialized electronic equipment is the most widely implemented approach (77.4%), followed by large print materials (60.1%) and captioning (58.3%). Video remote interpreting (47.0%) and ASL interpreting (40.5%) support employees who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Notably, only 46.4% have formally defined the criteria for undue hardship for this accommodation type.



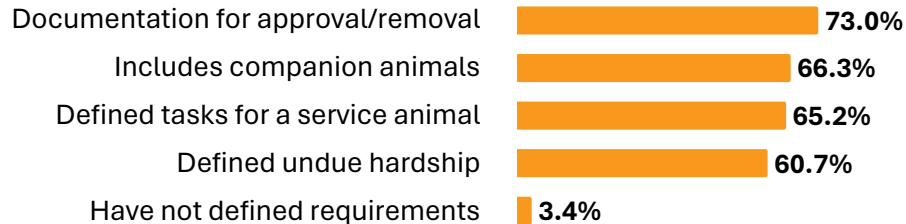
Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple.

Mobility accommodations are offered by 62.2% of employers, and those programs are generally well-structured. Among organizations with mobility accommodation programs (n=158), accommodations for storage of mobility devices lead at 71.5%, followed by defined safety considerations (63.9%), circumstances under which devices are permitted (61.4%), and size/dimension specifications (58.9%). More than half (55.7%) have formalized criteria for undue hardship; fewer than 4% have no formal requirements in place.



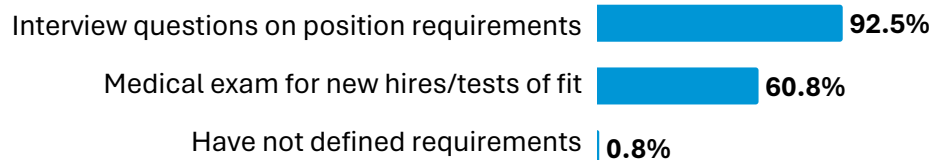
Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple.

Service animal accommodations are offered by 35.0% of employers. Among these organizations (n=89), documentation requirements for service animal approval and removal are the most widely established practice (73.0%). Notably, 66.3% of programs also include companion animals, such as therapy or visitation dogs, indicating that many employers have taken an expansive view beyond the strict ADA definition. Only 3.4% have not defined any formal requirements.



Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple.

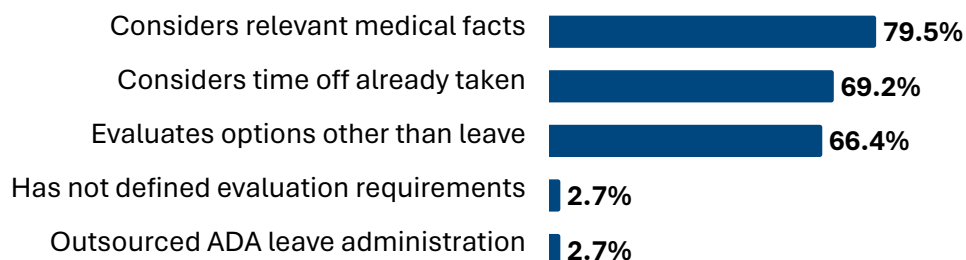
Pre-employment accommodations are offered by 47.2% of organizations. Among those (n=120), structured interview questions focused on a candidate's ability to meet position requirements are used by 92.5%, the highest sub-item rate across any accommodation category in this study. Medical examinations for new hires are used by 60.8%. Nearly all employers in this category have defined operational requirements (only 0.8% have not), reflecting broad awareness of the legal stakes in pre-employment practices.



Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple.

Granting Leaves Under ADA Provisions

More than half of all employers (57.5%) have granted leaves under ADA provisions, distinct from FMLA or other statutory entitlements. Among those organizations (n=146), leave evaluations are anchored by relevant medical facts (79.5%) and consideration of time already taken (69.2%). Two-thirds (66.4%) formally evaluate alternatives to leave before granting an ADA leave, reflecting sound interactive process practice. Only 2.7% have not defined evaluation requirements, and the same share has fully outsourced ADA leave administration.

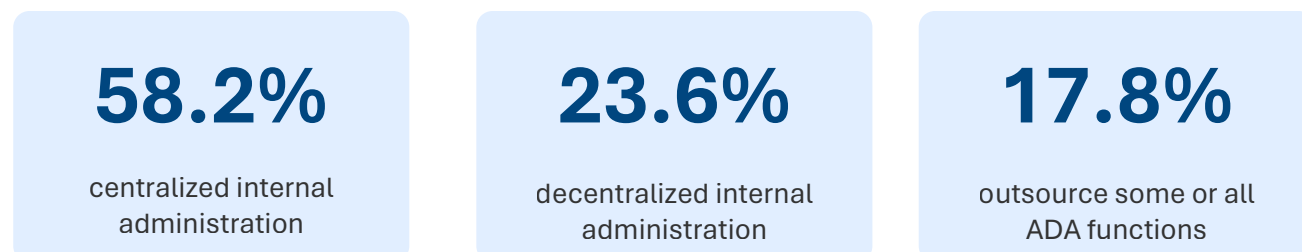


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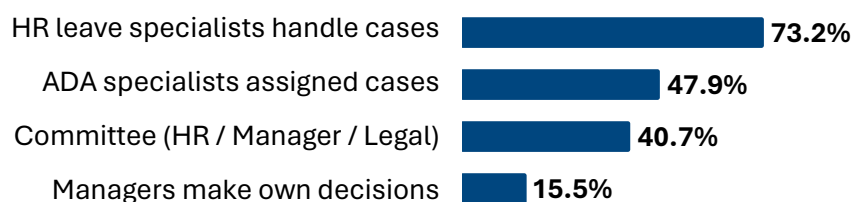
Program Administration, Technology & Processes

How Organizations Administer ADA Claims

The majority of employers manage ADA administration internally. 81.9% of organizations handle all aspects of ADA in-house, with the most common model being centralized internal administration (58.2%). Another 23.6% use a decentralized internal approach. A smaller share (17.8%) outsources some or all administrative functions to a leave or disability vendor.



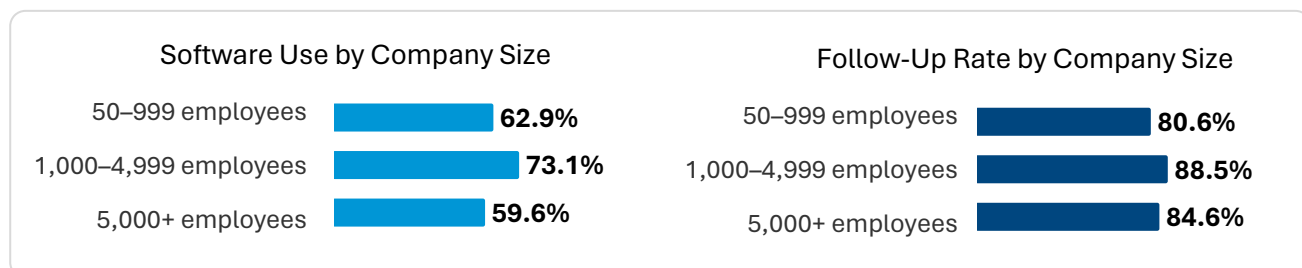
Among internally managed programs (n=194), the HR leave specialist model is the most common (73.2%). Dedicated ADA specialists are assigned cases in 47.9% of organizations, while 40.7% use committee-based decision-making involving HR, management, and legal. A smaller share (15.5%) allows managers to make their own ADA decisions, a practice that carries heightened risk without appropriate training and oversight.



Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple.

Technology: Widespread Adoption, Gaps Remain

Specialized software to support ADA compliance and administration is used by 70% of employers, but 19.4% report no use of dedicated technology, and 10.5% were unsure. Adoption is highest among mid-sized organizations (1,000–4,999 employees: 73.1%) and lower at both extremes. These patterns may reflect resource constraints at smaller companies and legacy infrastructure at the largest ones.

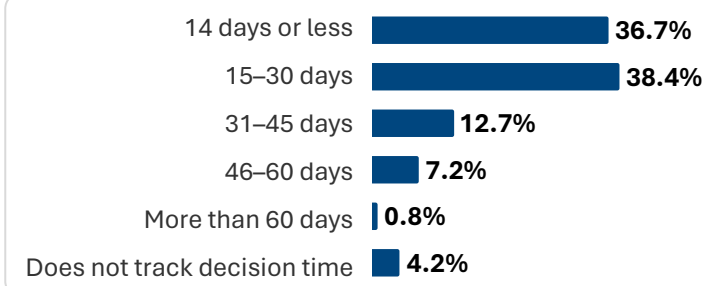


Note: Percentages reflect the share of organizations within each company size band that reported the given practice, and are not intended to sum to 100%.

The strong majority of employers (89.9%) follow up with employees after an accommodation has been implemented to confirm it is working as intended, a critical but often overlooked step in the ADA interactive process. Only 5.1% report no follow-up process, while the same proportion is unsure, suggesting gaps in formal process documentation even when follow-up occurs informally.

Decision Timelines

Among organizations that have made ADA accommodations in the past five years (n=237), 75.1% make accommodation decisions within 30 days. Only 4.2% do not formally track decision timelines, a process gap that creates both compliance risk and employee experience concerns.



Organizational Views on ADA

Employers hold predominantly positive strategic views of ADA administration. 66.9% identify ADA accommodations as vital to employee productivity, and an equal proportion sees them as an asset for recruiting top talent. Nearly two-thirds (61.8%) view their ADA program as critical to overall organizational success.

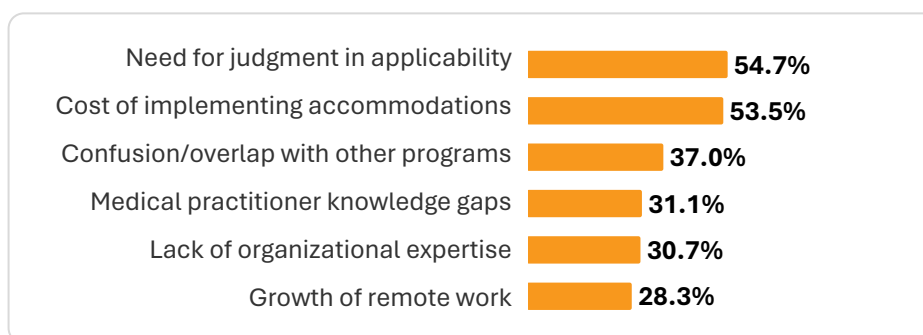


Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple.

Notably, 39.8% of organizations have advanced from simply complying to actively promoting equity, developing programs that go beyond legal requirements to ensure fair treatment for employees with disabilities. This change marks a significant shift in how employers structure and support disability initiatives. Only 10.6% characterize ADA administration as adding unnecessary burden, a minority view that nonetheless signals where organizational culture and process investment still lag.

Key Challenges in ADA Administration

The need for judgment in defining ADA applicability is the most commonly cited challenge (54.7%), closely followed by the cost of implementing accommodations (53.5%). These findings reflect the inherent tension in ADA administration: it demands legally sophisticated case-by-case reasoning and financial resources that not all organizations have. Confusion and overlap with other leave programs (37.0%), medical practitioner knowledge gaps (31.1%), and lack of organizational expertise (30.7%) round out the top challenges. Remote work, increasingly central to workforce management, is a growing source of accommodation complexity for 28.3% of employers.



Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple.

Proactive Inclusion and Resource Awareness

A majority of employers (65.4%) actively pursue candidates who may need workplace accommodations, a sign that disability-inclusive recruitment is becoming mainstream. Nearly a quarter (24.4%) do not actively pursue such candidates, and 10.2% are unsure of their organization's practices in this area.

Resource awareness is strong: 87.4% of HR decision-makers know where to turn for answers on ADA applicability questions, whether through internal expertise, vendor partners, or government guidance. The 12.6% who are unsure or do not know represent a meaningful opportunity for employer education.

65.4%

actively pursue candidates who may need accommodations

87.4%

know where to go for ADA compliance answers

89.9%

follow up with employees after accommodations are made

Future Plans and Program Evolution

Most organizations are planning meaningful changes to ADA administration. 39.4% plan to reorganize an internal team around ADA requests, and 35.8% plan to hire dedicated ADA specialists. Outsourcing to a vendor (33.1%) and bringing administration back in-house (31.9%) are cited at nearly equal rates, suggesting a market in flux where neither model has established clear dominance.

Only 25.6% selected 'none of the above,' meaning three-quarters of organizations are actively evaluating changes to their ADA programs. This breadth of planned evolution underscores both growing investment in ADA and the complexity of identifying the right administrative model for each organization's size and structure.



Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple programs.

Key Takeaways & Implications for Employers

The following takeaways synthesize findings from all sections of this report, with a focus on practical implications for HR, benefits, and legal leaders designing or evolving ADA accommodation programs.

ADA programs are strategic assets, not just compliance obligations.

More than two-thirds of employers view ADA accommodations as vital to productivity and recruitment. Framing accommodation programs in terms of workforce outcomes, retention, productivity, and engagement is the more durable argument for sustained leadership investment.

Internal administration dominates, but human capital investment varies.

Three-quarters of employers manage ADA internally, but the degree of specialization differs significantly. Organizations relying solely on general HR staff or frontline managers face an elevated risk. Dedicated specialists and committee-based structures are associated with more consistent, legally defensible outcomes.

Technology adoption is strong but incomplete.

Most employers use specialized ADA software, yet 19% still manage compliance entirely without dedicated tools. As accommodation requests grow more complex, especially for remote workers and employees with psychiatric or episodic disabilities, manual administration becomes a liability.

Follow-up is the norm; formalizing it is the opportunity.

Roughly 90% of employers follow up after implementing an accommodation. However, the lack of formal documentation for these practices, particularly in smaller organizations, creates risk. Structured, documented follow-up is an essential component of the interactive process and a defensible record of good-faith compliance.

Decision speed is a strength; documentation remains a gap.

The majority of ADA decisions are made within 30 days, reflecting strong operational practice. However, nearly 4% of employers do not track decision timelines at all, a gap that undermines process accountability and legal defensibility. Standardized tracking is a low-cost, high-value process improvement.

Judgment and cost are the defining challenges.

The dual top challenges, the need for case-level judgment and the cost of accommodations, reflect the reality that ADA is neither a simple checkbox exercise nor a low-cost commitment. Organizations can address both through specialist training, interactive process frameworks, and proactive cost modeling.

Equity-minded programs are growing — the gap matters.

Forty percent of employers report having moved beyond compliance to equity. The distance between these organizations and those still in compliance-only mode is likely to widen as employee expectations evolve and regulatory scrutiny increases. For organizations not yet at equity, the path forward begins with a formal self-assessment against leading practice benchmarks.

About IBI Leave Benchmarking Series

This report is part of the Integrated Benefits Institute's Leave Benchmarking Series, a research initiative examining employer-sponsored leave programs and their impact on workforce health, productivity, and organizational outcomes. Through surveys of HR decision-makers across diverse industries, company sizes, and geographic regions, this series provides actionable insights into leave benefit design, implementation practices, and measurable business impacts.

Each report focuses on specific leave types, including family and parental leave, volunteer leave, and bereavement leave, among others, while examining cross-cutting themes such as wage replacement strategies, eligibility criteria, administration models, and outcomes measurement. By establishing empirical benchmarks and identifying leading practices, this research supports organizations in designing competitive and sustainable leave programs, optimizing administrative approaches, and quantifying the business case for leave benefit investments.

About The Integrated Benefits Institute

The Integrated Benefits Institute's independent research, industry-leading tools, and data resources help companies link health-related programs to outcomes that maximize people's contributions to productivity and business performance.

When it comes to quantifying health and well-being choices, employers need to know what good looks like, and providers need to show what value looks like. IBI provides unbiased research and insights so employers and providers can make health decisions that positively impact people, productivity, and performance (3Ps). For additional information, please visit www.ibiweb.org and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).