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# Recognizing Faculty with Disabilities:

DATA AND CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE FACULTY JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY

For the past two years, the collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) has incorporated a set of questions in its Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey related to disability status. By segmenting respondents into three groups: Respondents with visible disabilities, invisible disabilities, and no disabilities, COACHE is able to identify differences in faculty perceptions of their workplace based on disability status.

Of the faculty who reported having a sensory or motor disability (visible disability), **one in ten** indicated they had not shared their disability status with anyone on their campus. On the other hand, roughly **one in three** faculty with a diagnosed learning impairment or mental health disorder (invisible disability) reported they had not disclosed their disability with anyone at their institution. The disparity in disclosure statuses led us to inquire about whether and how faculty members' perceptions of their workplace might differ by disability status.

COACHE discovered three main insights that may help administrators better understand the differences between these groups, and improve their disability resources for faculty.

## 1. "I am able to balance the teaching, research, and service (and clinical, if applicable) activities expected of me."

Respondents that *disagreed* with this statement:

- 34 percent of people with visible disabilities
- 49 percent of people with invisible disabilities
- 34 percent of people without disabilities

Questions to ask from this data:

- How might increased expectations for hybrid or online teaching impact these faculty's ability to balance responsibilities?
- What additional challenges do faculty with disabilities face in their day-to-day work?



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## 2. “I have been able to find the right balance, for me, between my professional life and my personal/family life”

Respondents that *disagreed* with this statement:

- 38 percent of people with visible disabilities
- 52 percent of people with invisible disabilities
- 34 percent of people without disabilities

Questions to ask from this data:

- How might faculty's non-disclosure of a disability affect their access to work-life resources meant to support them? What can be done to mitigate any gaps in access?
- Why do the majority of faculty with invisible disabilities struggle to achieve work-life balance?

## 3. “I am satisfied with how well I fit in my department (e.g. sense of belonging).”

Respondents that *disagreed* with this statement:

- 27 percent of people with visible disabilities
- 36 percent of people with invisible disabilities
- 18 percent of people without disabilities

Questions to ask from this data:

- How can your campus community improve how faculty with disabilities, visible and invisible, feel about their sense of belonging in their department?
- For institutions with their own COACHE data, how do these disparities play out across your divisions and disciplines?

These insights uncovered from Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey data can help institutions gain a better understanding of their faculty and uncover questions that administrators should be exploring.

For more information on how COACHE data can be applied on your campus, contact us today.  
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Source: Mathews, K., Benson, R. T., Trower, C., Azuibuike, N. O. & Kumar, A. (2020). The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education: Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey, 2019-2020 (Research version) [data file and codebook]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.