



# National Network

Information, Guidance, and Training on the  
Americans with Disabilities Act

Call us toll-free  
1-800-949-4232 V/TTY  
Find your regional center at  
[www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

---

## ADA Systematic Review: Summary of Year 1, Scoping Review

**Sarah Parker Harris ([skparker@uic.edu](mailto:skparker@uic.edu)) and Robert Gould ([rgould3@uic.edu](mailto:rgould3@uic.edu))  
Department of Disability & Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago**

Research on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) includes many different research questions and methods, covers numerous topic areas, and impacts diverse groups of people. Because of this broad range of research, policy makers and researchers are often unsure about the true impact of the ADA. We do not know for certain the ways in which this law has helped different people. To address this uncertainty, the University of Illinois at Chicago is conducting a five-year review of the ADA as part of the NIDRR funded National ADA Knowledge Translation Center based at the University of Washington. The first stage of the project involved gathering all of the scientific research on the ADA to produce what is called a scoping review.

The primary reason for this project is to better understand what research exists that studies the impact of the ADA. The first year of the project involved:

- Creating and working with a panel of national experts on the ADA to identify information gaps in the literature, confirm findings, and guide future research.
- Searching for all of the research on the ADA in different online and library databases. We analyzed the abstracts of 34,599 records to locate the empirical (scientific) research on the ADA. 980 of the records were relevant to this project.
- Entering key information from the abstracts of research records to answer the main research question: “What English-language studies have been conducted and/or published from 1990 onwards that empirically study the Americans with Disabilities Act?”

From this scoping review we created a summary of which groups of people were studied, what areas were most often studied, how they have been studied, and what research needs further attention. Some important findings about the research include:

- The most common topic studied is employment (48% of the research records) and the second most common is education (16%).

- The most common issues that were studied across different research topics included: attitudes and knowledge about people with disabilities and the ADA; barriers and facilitators to implementing the policy; compliance rates; and costs associated with the ADA.
- Critical areas (i.e. emergency and voting) have virtually no research.
- There is very little research that includes diverse groups of people (including families, advocates, and practitioners), and the majority of research is either on people with disabilities or businesses/employers.

Some of the key findings include:

- The majority of existing research on the ADA is quantitative. More qualitative research is needed to understand the impact of the ADA on the lived experience of disability.
- Topic areas such as emergency preparedness/response, voting and housing are important to address in future research because these are clear areas in which people with disabilities continue to experience discrimination.
- Families and advocates are important groups that are affected by the ADA and require more attention in future research.

The research team consulted with the expert panel committee and directors of the ADA Regional Centers to review the findings of the scoping review and identify priorities for future reviews. We incorporated the feedback into the final technical report. Moving forward, we will continue to share our research findings to a wide range of stakeholders to increase the use of available ADA research to help inform policies and practices that maximize the full inclusion in society for individuals with disabilities.

---

Developed by



**For more information contact:**

Department of Disability and Human Development  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Suite 436 DHSP  
1640 W. Roosevelt Road (MC 626)  
Chicago, IL 60608  
Phone: (312) 413-1647  
Fax: (312) 413-1630  
TTY: (312) 413-0453  
<http://www.ahs.uic.edu/dhd/>

This information product was developed under a grant from the Department of Education, NIDRR grant number H133A11014. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



©Copyright 2013 ADA National Network.  
All Rights Reserved.

May be reproduced and distributed freely  
with attribution to ADA National Network  
([www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)).