STEPS

An Inclusive Community

Survey on Employment for People with Disabilities

Background

Available data from the DEPW (2022) indicates that 855,000 Thai people with disabilities (PWDs) are in working age, but more than 102,000 of them are unemployed in spite of their ability to enter the labour market. Hence, this survey was conducted to investigate the readiness, perspective and situation of Thai business sectors in recruiting PWDs and neurodivergent people, while engendering the inclusive workplace at their company.

Objectives

This report was conducted with primary objectives as follows: 1) to better understand the employment situation of people with disabilities in Thai companies, and 2) to find out the prospective companies which are interested in employing neurodivergent people.

Data Collection and analysis

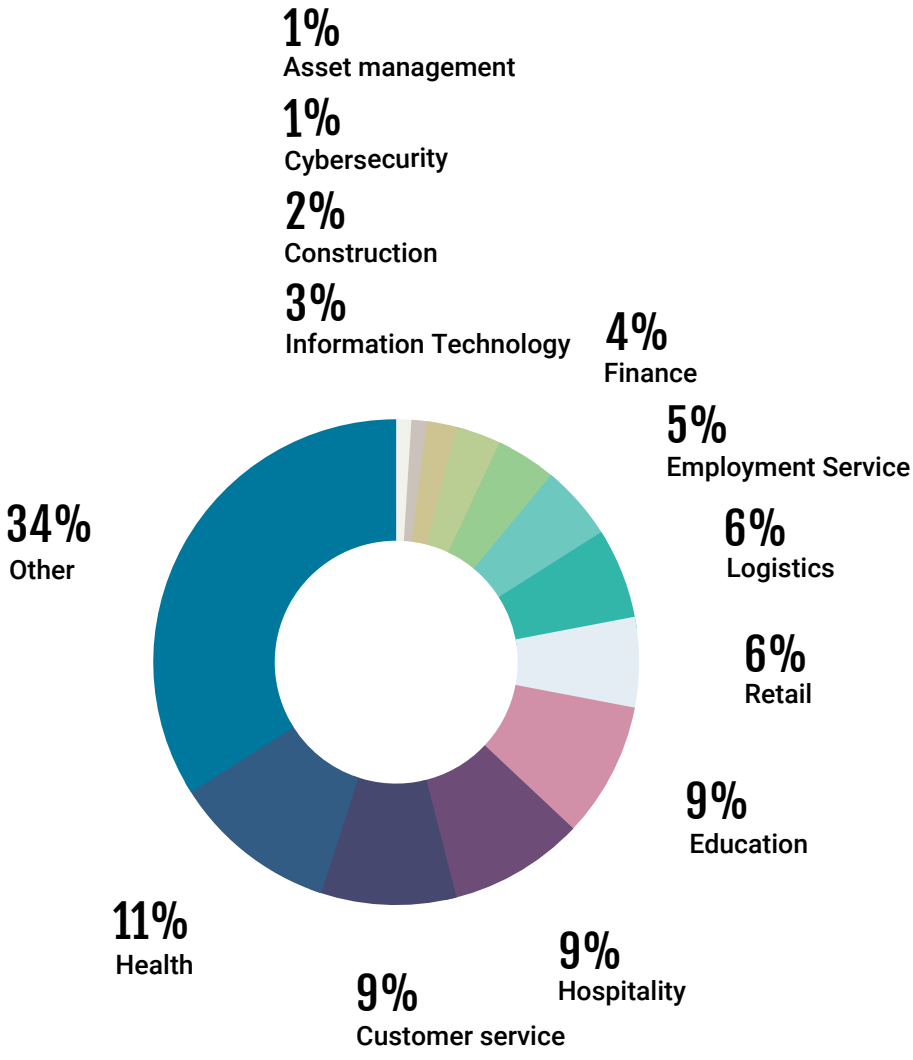
In order to collect data from employers in Thai business, the research team conveyed the Google Forms questionnaire in both Thai and English versions at the Thailand HR Tech event at Royal Paragon Hall during 14-15 June 2023. Consequently, the research team recruited HR employees who are attendees of the event, while a snack box was given as a reward. 100 questionnaires were completed in total. Both Thai and English versions were merged and analysed via a data visualisation tool in Google Forms.

Survey Results

Section I : Employers' Demography

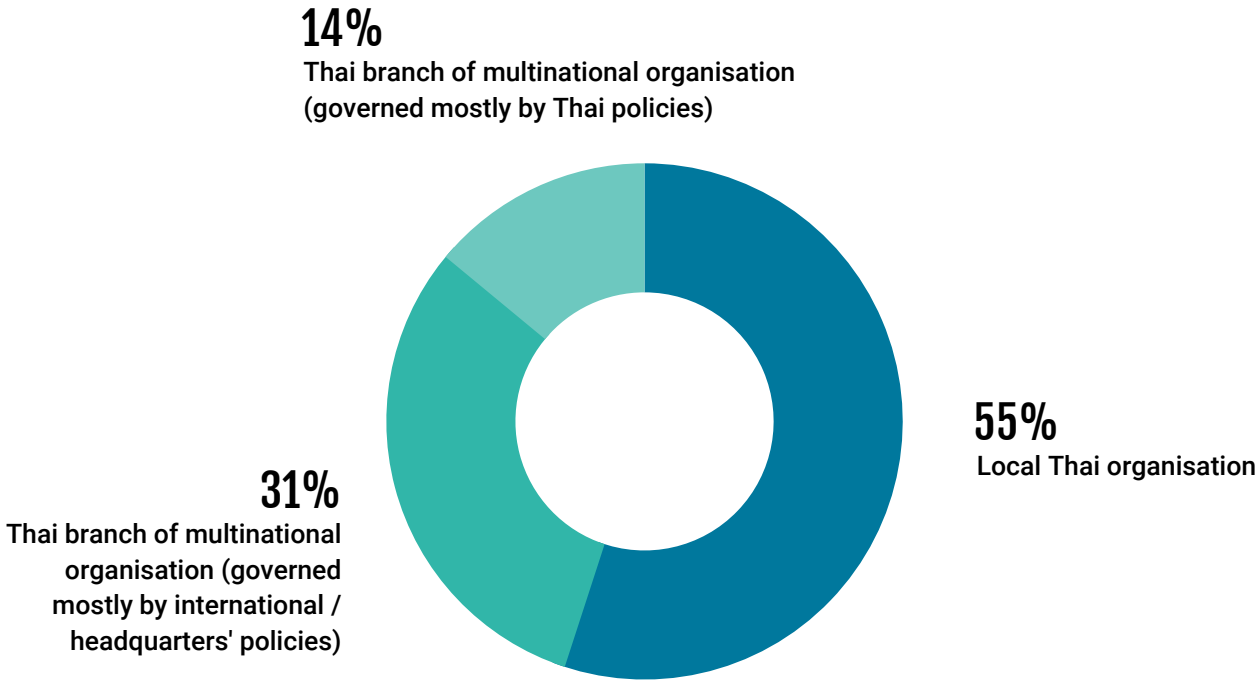
Question 1: Select the industry (or industries) that best represent your organisation.

Representatives from several companies completed the questionnaire. The result shows that their business focus varies, ranging from education, technology, investment, hospitality, to common business. The below diagram indicates the respondents' background.



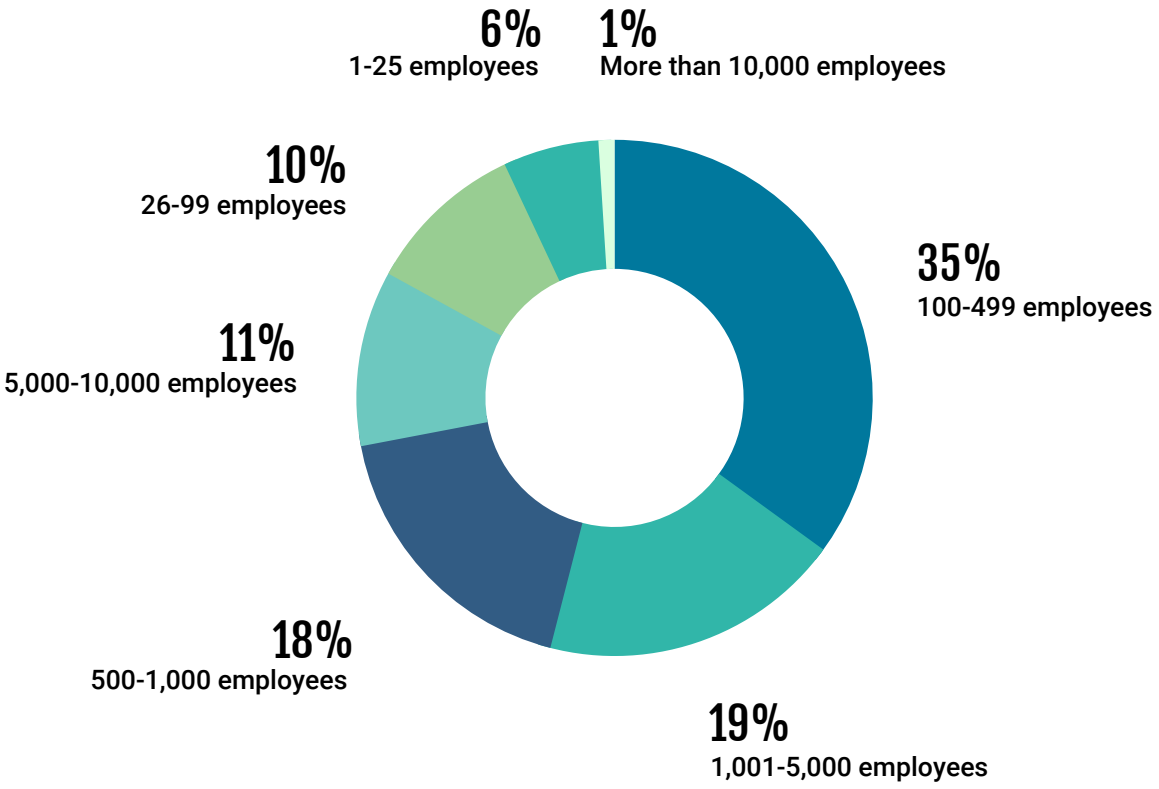
Question 2: Which of the below best describes your organisation?

This question was asked to gain an understanding of each company's internal policies for recruiting PWDs or neurodivergent people. The result portrays that 55% of the respondents are pure Thai organisations, 31% of the respondents are Thai branches of multinational organisations where they receive policies from their headquarters abroad, and only 14% of the respondents are Thai branches of multinational organisations but have their own local policy.



Question 3: What is the size of your company?

In terms of the size, each company varies in size ranging from 1 to 10,000 employees. The results shows that 35% of the respondents have 100-499 employees, 19% have 1,001-5,000 employees, 18% have 500-1,000 employees, 11% have 5,000-10,000 employees, 10% have 26-99 employees, 6% have 1-25 employees, while only 1% have employees more than 10,000.



Question 4: If your organisation is employing people with disabilities, which group of people with disabilities are you currently working with?

This is an open-ended question reflecting a multiplicity of answers. Interestingly, 64 companies out of all respondents reported their current employment of PWDs whether direct employment or indirect employment was via the Thai Red Cross Society. People with mobility challenges attract employers the most, while the second and the third are people with visual difficulties and people with hearing difficulties respectively. They were recruited in different positions whether administrative, accountant, or customer service.

Nevertheless, neurodivergent individuals are neglected from most employers' interest since no employers are recruiting this group of people.

Section II : Employment of Neurodivergent people: Precedents and possibilities

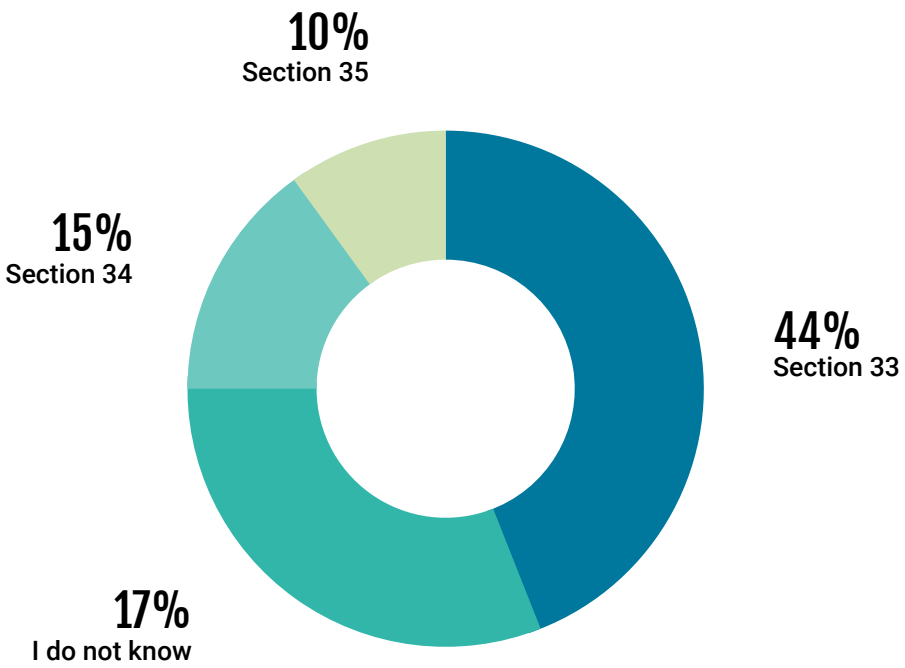
Question 5: How is your current understanding of the government guidance on hiring people with disabilities in Thailand?

The result portrays that more than half, 59%, of the respondents indicate that they do not understand the Thai government's guidance in recruiting PWDs at all. While only 41% of the respondents conversely depict that they do understand the guidance of the Thai government on employing PWDs in Thailand very well.

Question 6: Please specify the type of employment legal Act your company is following, regarding the employment of people with disabilities?

According to Thailand's People with Disabilities Empowerment Act. 2007, section 33 indicates that employing PWDs directly in positions suitable for them for a 1 year work contract could result in tax exemptions. Otherwise, employers need to comply with a) section 34 to send compensation to a fund designated organisation, or b) section 35 to hire subcontracted employees or employment services by special means, with grant concessions to indirectly employ PWDs.

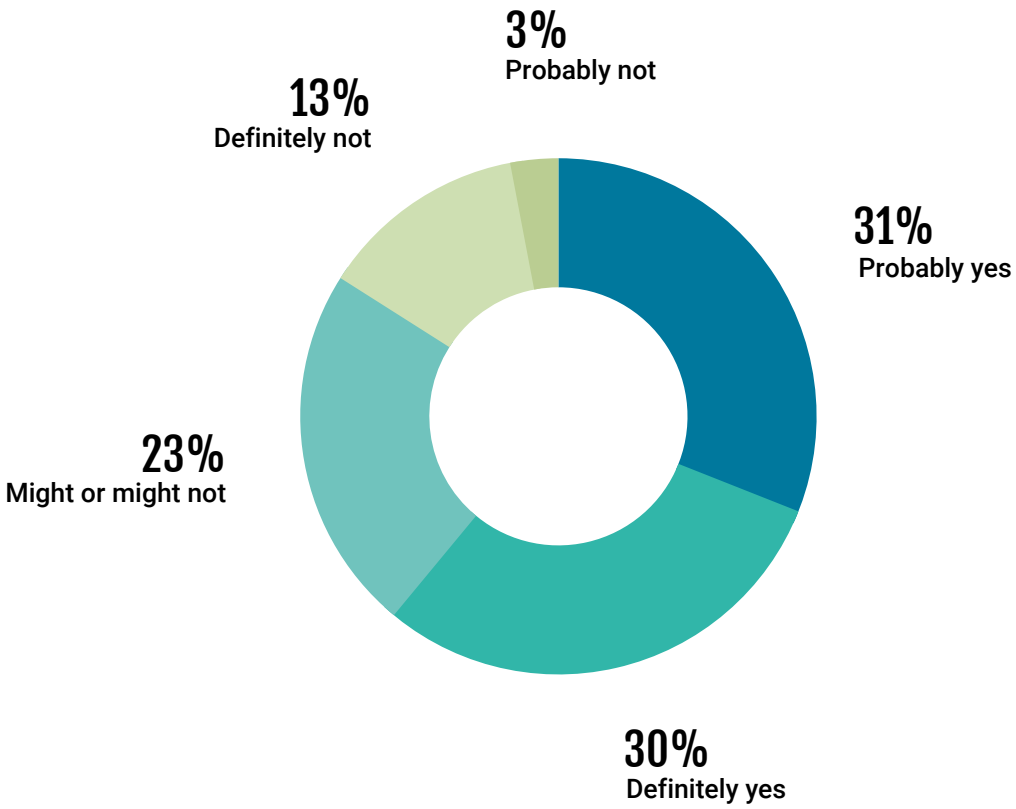
To comply with the aforementioned law, the result indicates that 44% of the respondents comply with section 33, 17% do not know about the law, 15% comply with section 34, and 10% comply with section 35.



Question 7: Does your organisation have plans to develop an employment program for people with disabilities?

When it comes to plans to promote the employment of PWDs, the result indicates that 31% of the respondents answered "probably yes" to employ PWDs, 30% of the respondents show their eagerness to employ PWDs by answering "definitely yes", while 23% of the respondents show their hesitation by answering "might or might not".

Sadly, 13% of the respondents show no interest in employing PWDs by answering "definitely not", and only 3% think that they "probably not" recruit PWDs.



Question 8: What is your opinion regarding the employment of people with disabilities in your organisation?

This is an open-ended question reflecting a multiplicity of answers. Surprisingly, most respondents indicate their eagerness to recruit PWDs as they think this is a way to provide opportunities for PWDs, create diversity, improve inclusion across society, promote a better quality of life for PWDs, and raise awareness of the potential of PWDs.

Nonetheless, some show their hesitation in recruiting PWDs for the following reasons: difficulty in management, ambiguity of employment systems, challenges finding qualified PWDs, and lack of facilities in the workplace.

Question 9: What are the primary concerns you have about the success of the employment program for people with disabilities?

This is a multiple choice question for which the respondents can choose more than one answer.

32.7% of the answers emphasise concern about finding suitable roles for PWDs as the predominant obstacle for the success of the employment program for PWDs. Only 7.1% of the respondents see getting general support from non-management employees is a barrier to the success of employment programs for PWDs. The below diagram shows what considered by employers as obstacles to the success of PWD employment programs.

Conclusion

The survey results can be interpreted in many ways. In terms of the public perspective regarding PWDs, people are focusing on those with mobility, hearing, and visual difficulties primarily, and overlooking those who are neurodivergent. However, the public notion about PWDs is positive, since they are perceived to be able, eager and have the right attitude to work.

In terms of the understanding of Thailand's People with Disabilities Empowerment Act. 2007, it is low among employers since 59% of the respondents do not understand what practices should be done to promote the employment of PWDs in the long run.

Interestingly, 61% of the respondents have future plans or projects in recruiting PWDs. Improving access to employment opportunities and a better quality of life were seen as two primary motivations for offering them a job. Further research into how we can reverse this perception is warranted if we are to see a sustained increase in employment of PWDS, as businesses need to implement long term hiring strategies rather than treating the employment of PWDs as box ticking for corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Lastly, in order to employ PWDs, employers are most concerned about finding a suitable role for PWDs. This means they have no mediator who could match PWDs with their desired jobs currently.

Government-funded Online Job Hunting Platform for Employers and People with Disabilities

In 2022, the UNICEF, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), and the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) developed a chatbot to address complaints from PWDs and the production of communication materials to increase understanding on social services for PWDs.

This chatbot could be further developed and provided as a platform to connect employers and PWDs who are seeking a job. As mainstream job hunting platforms are dominated by typical people, PWDs could be overshadowed somehow. This could be the best option for employers to find PWDs with their desired abilities and vice versa.

Promotion of Understanding of the People with Disabilities Empowerment Act. 2007

The Thai government should be responsible in promoting the People with Disabilities Empowerment Act. 2007 whether online or offline. Relevant authorities are required to produce promotional materials in raising awareness and understanding with the public.

The private sector should also provide relevant information and guidebooks during the initial onboarding of human resource officers, so officers have a better understanding and more confidence to promote inclusion in the workplace.

Inaccuracy of Some Respondents' Background

As mentioned earlier, this survey was conveyed during the public event where the event's attendees are different in background, whether a job seeker, company's officer, etc. Even the research team attempted to identify each respondent's background as an HR officer, some respondents might hide their identity and complete the survey. This could reflect in the accuracy of data since some of the respondents might not be the target group of this survey.

For future study, it could minimise such research limitation by conveying the survey to the HR division of each company directly whether online or offline. Hence, it could ensure the accuracy of data.

The Implementation of the People with Disabilities Empowerment Act. 2007 by the Respondents' Company

Regarding question number 6, some respondents might follow both section 33 and 35 in their company. Nevertheless, this survey did not analyse those who complying with both sections.

For future study, it should emphasise the factor or stipulation behind their decision in complying with both section 33 and 35 simultaneously, rather than complying only one section. It is to understand the company's perspective and decision-making to promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

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