

Article

Disability, the Audiovisual Industry, and Employment in Spain: Experts' Perspectives on Motivations and Barriers to Inclusion

Marta Perlado Lamo de Espinosa , Carlos Jiménez Narros  and Mercedes Herrero de la Fuente * 

Department of Communication, Faculty of Communication and Arts, Antonio de Nebrija University, 28003 Madrid, Spain; mperlado@nebrija.es (M.P.L.d.E.); cjimenez@nebrija.es (C.J.N.)

* Correspondence: mherrero@nebrija.es

Abstract

The Spanish audiovisual industry has experienced unprecedented growth, offering new employment opportunities. In this context, the aim of the present work is to analyse the perceptions of experts on the motivations and barriers that affect the employment of disabled people in this industry. This research adopts a sequential mixed-method design, combining a focus group with a two-round Delphi technique, and involved participants working in audiovisual companies, specialised job portals, disabled people associations, and research. The results indicate that despite the prior limited experience with people with disabilities, audiovisual companies show a positive attitude towards their employment. Nevertheless, barriers persist related to a lack of confidence in their work performance and their ability to adapt to the demands of the position. Likewise, remote work, digital technologies, and artificial intelligence are perceived as facilitators of inclusion, although their effectiveness depends on provision of adequate training and accessibility. These findings suggest that from an expert's perspective, the inclusion of disabled people in the audiovisual sector depends on organisational factors, accessibility conditions, and adequate training.

Keywords: disability; employment; inclusion; audiovisual industry; new technologies

1. Introduction

1.1. General Information and Theoretical Approaches

Disabled people are an asset for society but they have not been fully integrated into the labour market due to a lack of opportunities. In Spain, this group comprises 6.3% of the working-age population but their employment rate is only 26.9% (INE, 2022, p. 1), which is almost 40 points below that of the rest of the population. In addition, their long-term unemployment rate exceeds 54.8% (SEPE, 2023, p. 34), in a context marked by short-term work and the insufficient recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, which places this population in a position of greater vulnerability and risk of social exclusion.

This situation is aggravated by factors such as insufficient training (Odismet, 2023), and the persistence of prejudices (EAPN, 2022) or gender or age inequalities, which especially affect women and young people. Likewise, the type and degree of disability significantly influence access to employment, with those with intellectual disability having the most difficulties, often because of the stigma faced by this group (Zamorano et al., 2024; Laborda et al., 2021; Jariot et al., 2020).

In addition, there are distortions in the employment figures and difficulties in meeting the legal quotas in the private and public sectors, with a significant part of the reserved



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positions not being filled (SEPE, 2023; Odismet, 2023; Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública, 2022).

All of the above connects this work with studies on ableism, which have demonstrated discrimination against people with disabilities, who are devalued for not meeting standard parameters (Campbell, 2009). In the area of employment, the difficulties in revealing a disability, the barriers to accessing the work setting, and the insufficient adaptations of positions discriminate against disabled people; moreover, inter-sectional factors, such as gender, can deepen this exclusion (Sharma et al., 2025).

In audiovisual projects, due to the temporary nature of employment and the time constraints imposed during certain phases, such as shooting, difficulties often arise in permanently incorporating professionals with disabilities. This is despite the existence of recent laws, such the Film and Audiovisual Culture Law (2022), that stipulates that to be eligible for public funding, 2% of the workforce of public or private companies with more than 50 employees must comprise employees with recognised disabilities (Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social, 2026).

Here, our approach is based on the Social Model of Disability, which considers disability not as primarily an individual or medical problem, but the result of social, environmental, and attitudinal barriers that prevent full participation (Oliver, 1998). It emphasises that people with disabilities can similarly contribute to society, fostering an appreciation for inclusion and respect for diversity.

This study was conducted using the framework of the digital society, which is understood as a technologically conditioned environment in which access to educational and employment opportunities is mediated by digital infrastructures, technological skills, and algorithmic intermediation systems (Castells, 2000; Van Dijk, 2005), and in which digitalisation influences structural transformation and social inclusion. It is worth highlighting, among the contributions to the field of disability studies, the approach of Shakespeare (2006), who challenged the rigid separation between individual limitations and social barriers defined by Oliver (1998) and proposed understanding disability as the result from the interaction between bodily conditions, social structures, and technological environments. This more nuanced perspective acknowledges the lived experience of impairment and the role of society in enabling or restricting participation. For Shakespeare (2006), it is essential to remove social barriers whilst recognising that certain limitations arising from a disability also require medical support, rehabilitation, assistive technology, or reasonable adjustments. In this sense, digital society is not a neutral space, but an environment in which the design of technologies can contribute to inclusion and to the generation of new forms of inclusion.

1.2. Impact of New Technologies on Employability of the Disabled Community

Several authors have highlighted digital technologies as a potential tool for transforming the social and labour inclusion of disabled people (De Oliveira et al., 2021). Nevertheless, their impact is not homogeneous. McDonald and Clayton (2013) identified barriers such as the scarcity of resources, insufficient qualifications, and limitations in accessibility, while other authors underlined that technological designs do not adequately consider functional diversity (Watling, 2011; Palmer et al., 2012). Along this line, Tsatsou (2021, p. 709) pointed out that the lack of access to technology is “a denial of opportunities”, an idea that is also shared by Herrero et al. (2022).

At the same time, a limited number of studies have underlined the potential of technology in facilitating the insertion of individuals with disabilities into the labour market, with optimistic results (Hedrick et al., 2006; Johnson, 2019). Some of them pointed to the

advantages of entrepreneurship (Boellstorff, 2019), although this possibility is not widespread in Spain due to the lack of well-defined employment policies (Manzanera et al., 2019).

A recent survey by the Fundación Adecco (2022) revealed that 91.8% of disabled people perceive an improvement in quality of life owing to technology, and 48% were able to finish their training or become employed through adapted tools (Fundación Adecco, 2022, p. 12). However, important technological barriers persist, especially regarding accessibility, and difficulties in the search for online employment which, despite having grown in recent years, is not yet widespread across all sectors or companies. Likewise, 32% of those surveyed believed that artificial intelligence (AI) could contribute to exclusion during selection processes (Fundación Adecco, 2021, p. 8) as AI systems may reproduce or reinforce existing discrimination, leading to candidates with disabilities being screened out before reaching the interview stage. The respondents also expressed concerns that increasing automation could replace jobs traditionally held by people with disabilities, further limiting their employment opportunities.

Along this line, telework has contributed to a reduction in physical and mobility barriers, and minimised the importance of some limitations associated with disabilities (Pérez-Roldán, 2021), although it can also generate new forms of precariousness. Teleworking in Spain now extends to every working day (12.5% of those consulted) or more than half of the work week (6.1%) according to the Observatorio Nacional de Tecnología y Sociedad (ONTSI) (2023, p. 5). This practice eliminates the problems derived from travel and places the characteristics that are commonly associated with disability in the background (Pérez-Roldán, 2021) but may also favour situations of isolation (Qu, 2022). Both perceptions are found among these individuals, who positively value telecommuting in general terms, but with differences observed according to the type of disability: 70% of those with physical disabilities, 52% of those with psychological disabilities, and 46% of those with sensorial disabilities support this modality, while only 25% of those with intellectual disabilities prefer this alternative to traditional work modes (Fundación Adecco, 2022, p. 17).

1.3. The Spanish Audiovisual Sector as a Space for the Employment of People with Disabilities

In parallel to the situation described above, the Spanish audiovisual industry has transformed in recent years, increasing the number of productions, especially in fiction content. This trend is expected to continue due to public investments and the influence of platforms such as Netflix, which, in 2019, established its European production centre in Madrid (Green, 2019) and constructed new installations and sets (Europa Press, 2022). The economic data back this data, with growth predictions above the global mean and a significant injection of public resources aimed at increasing production and the incorporation of new technologies (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2020; Ministerio de Asuntos Económicos y Transformación Digital, 2022). Furthermore, the Spanish industry has proven to be competitive, increasing production hours for series and feature films in recent years (Price Waterhouse Coopers & Pate Productores Audiovisuales, 2021; Gago et al., 2022). However, this is a dynamic sector, characterised by short-term projects, high-pressure production schedules, and the need for highly specialised profiles, factors that can influence the opportunities for accessing employment for vulnerable populations, such as disabled persons.

However, it should be noted that there is barely any academic interest in the presence of disabled professionals in Spanish industries. Although we may find some studies on the audiovisual sector (Perlado et al., 2021), recent studies have mainly centred on the area of communication, describing a panorama where we find a predominance of prejudices, fear, and lack of knowledge among employers (Sánchez-Valle et al., 2019). Likewise, physical and attitudinal barriers related to the performance and ability of disabled people have been identified, mainly due to this lack of knowledge (Viñarás et al., 2021).

In addition, these studies have highlighted the difficulties of intellectual disability, the need to develop inclusive technology, the obligation to meet the established quotas according to the law, and the demand for more aid to improve the equality of opportunities (Sánchez-Valle et al., 2019; Viñarás et al., 2021). Nevertheless, these studies did not specifically address the opinions of the different actors involved in the hiring processes within the audiovisual sector.

In this context, the aim of the present study was to analyse the perceptions of experts from different areas (audiovisual companies, job portals, associations for people with disabilities, and research) on the motivations and barriers that influence the inclusion of people with disabilities in the Spanish audiovisual industry, with a special focus on digital society.

2. Objectives

The aim of the present work was to analyse the perception of experts on the employability of people with disabilities in the context of digital society and audiovisual communication in Spain. The specific objectives were as follows:

- To explore the experts' depth of knowledge on and evaluation of the hiring and employability of disabled people in the digital society and the Spanish audiovisual sector.
- To identify, from the perspective of the experts, the motivations of and barriers erected by companies and organisations in this specific professional field when hiring people with disabilities.
- To examine the perceptions and attitudes of the experts with respect to the types of disability and their impact on employment opportunities.
- To analyse the perception of the experts on the impact of technology and artificial intelligence on the employability of disabled people.

3. Materials and Methods

A mixed sequential design was adopted, in which the results from the initial qualitative phase served as the basis for the development of a second phase oriented towards comparing the collected perceptions. This allowed for an in-depth exploration of the study subject by analysing the information through an iterative expert consultation process.

In the first phase, the focus group technique was used to identify relevant discourses and interpretative perceptions concerning the employability of people with disabilities in the audiovisual industry. This stage allowed for the generation of the preliminary analytical categories that served as the basis for the design of the questionnaire for the second phase.

The selection of participants of the focus group was performed through intentional sampling, considering the criteria of professional experience, knowledge on disability, and association with the audiovisual sector or employment. Efforts were made to guarantee a diversity of profiles, including company representatives, labour intermediaries, association members, and academic experts to gather diverse perspectives.

The discussion guide for the group was created based on the following themes:

- Perception of employability of people with disabilities.
- Attitudes that arise concerning their employment/employability (ideas, feelings, behaviours, etc.).
- Advantages and inconveniences for the contracting companies when incorporating disabled people in their workforce.
- Perceptions and assessments of the contribution of new communication technologies (e.g., AI and COBOTS (collaborative robots)) to the labour integration of people with disabilities.
- The place occupied by new technologies in the labour integration of people with disabilities in the Spanish audiovisual sector.

The group comprised 8 participants (2 experts for each of the following: companies in the audiovisual sector, specialised job portals, associations for people with disabilities, and researchers in this field (Table 1)). This sample size is considered adequate for these types of qualitative studies as they favour interactions between participants and reaching a sufficient degree of discourse saturation. According to Sandelowski (1995), this sample size is between a small group, which could be less representative, and a very large group, which may provide superficial data. Hamui and Varela (2013) believe that a focus group with 6–8 members can provide rich results, and Nyumba et al. (2018) found that from 170 studies including focus groups published between 1996 and 2017, the mean number of informants was 10.

Table 1. Experts who participated in the focus group.

Sector	Role	Company/Organisation	Participant Number
Companies in the audiovisual sector	Human Resources Manager	Thirteen TV	P1
	Human Resources	Mandarina Productions	P2
Specialised job portals	Project Manager	ManPower Group	P3
	Audiovisual Services Coordinator, Human Resources	Adecco	P4
Associations for people with disabilities	Human Resources Manager, Employment Coordinator	Galician Confederation of People with Disabilities (COGAMI)	P5
	Director and Coordinator Employability	Juan XXIII Foundation	P6
Research	Researcher Specialising in Accessibility	University of Design and Technology (UDIT)	P7
	Researcher Specialising in Accessibility	Carlos III University and Spanish Centre for Subtitling and Audio Description (CESyA)	P8

Source: created by the authors.

The focus group was conducted in February 2023 and lasted approximately 1.5 h.

Three researchers took part in the focus group, and their inputs were analysed using a deductive approach. These researchers' views were fairly similar on many positions.

In the second phase of this study, the Delphi technique was applied. It is a structured procedure that uses a questionnaire to obtain experts' opinions and to analyse their knowledge, which is given until a consensus on a specific topic is reached. The usefulness of this technique is based on "situations of uncertainty or when objective information is lacking" (Reguant & Torrado, 2016, p. 89). This prospective tool "allows prioritizing the ideas that emerge from the participants and favors the reflective and confidential exchange of different points of view" (Cabero & Infante, 2014, p. 5). It does not seek statistical generalisation of the results, but the attainment of an informed consensus based on expert judgement and thus the findings must be interpreted as a broad validation of the topics identified in the previous qualitative phase.

The Delphi questionnaire was created based on the results from the qualitative analysis of the focus group discussion; using a process of thematic categorisation, the main discourse themes were transformed into structured items.

The Delphi technique was applied in two rounds. In the first round, the participants answered a questionnaire structured into five sections: sociodemographic data; activities and roles of the company/organisation; disability and employment; disability and training; disability, profiles, and skills in the communication sector.

In the second round, the results were shared with the participants, which allowed the experts to revise their initial answers and opinions. In the second phase, questions that could not be asked again were eliminated (for example, do you have any experience hiring people with disabilities?), and items that obtained a strong consensus were removed (higher than 75%).

Forty specialists took part in the Delphi survey, ten from each of the previously defined sectors. Based on a database created as part of the research project, participants were selected through non-probabilistic sampling based on professional experience in the audiovisual industry, specialised knowledge about disability, and role in the area of employment.

The details of the participants in the Delphi study are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Companies/organisations of experts who participated in the Delphi study.

Companies in the Audiovisual Sector	Specialised Job Portals	Associations for People with Disabilities	Research
Galicia Radio and Television Corporation, S.A.	HOME—ETIC	ASEPAU, Spanish Association of Professionals in Universal Accessibility	Catholic University of Murcia
Radio Television of the Region of Murcia, 7 TV	ETT—A la Par Foundation	AICE Federation, Association of Cochlear Implant Users of Spain	CEU Cardenal Herrera University
Barrio Productions (Jordi Évole)	ETT—Triangle Auxiliary Services	Down Spain	Complutense University of Madrid
Radio and Television of Andalusia	ETT—Laborplus	FIAPAS, Spanish Confederation of Families of Deaf People	University of Murcia
Antena 3 TV	ETT—Plena Inclusión	PREDIF, State Representative Platform for People with Physical Disabilities	University of Salamanca
LOLA MullenLowe	ETT—Down Madrid	Association of Families and Deaf People	University of Valladolid
Thirteen TV	ETT—Hiring and Labour Integration	ASPACE, Spanish Confederation of Organizations for the Care of People with Cerebral Palsy and Related Conditions	University of Zaragoza
Boomerang TV	ETT—Disabled Associates Marketing Employment	Plena Inclusión, Spanish Confederation of Organizations in Favor of People with Intellectual Disabilities	University of the Basque Country
Valencian Corporation of Communications Mitjans	ETT—IMAN	ALCER, National Federation of Associations for the Fight Against Kidney Diseases	Antonio de Nebrija University
Canary Islands Public Radio and Television Corporation	ETT—Juan XIII Foundation	FAE, Asperger Federation of Spain	King Juan Carlos University

Source: created by the authors.

The information was collected through self-administered online questionnaires (CAWI), which were distributed via email. The voluntary and anonymous participation of the experts was guaranteed, in compliance with Organic Law 3/2018 on the Protection of Personal Data and Guarantee of Digital Rights and European Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR) and in accordance with ISO 2052 and the ICC/ESOMAR code of conduct.

The fieldwork for the first questionnaire took place from 9 May to 26 May 2023, and the second from 15 June to 16 July 2023.

In the first round of the Delphi study, 40 valid questionnaires were obtained (10 experts for each of the sectors), which aligns with the recommended number in the literature on the application of this method (Cabero & Infante, 2014). In the second round, 35 valid questionnaires were collected, with some dropouts from audiovisual companies

(7 participants) and job portals (8 participants), while all those from association groups and research completed the second questionnaire.

With respect to the sociodemographic profile of the Delphi participants, there was a higher presence of women (35% higher than men), with a predominance of participants in the 45–64 age range, with the Community of Madrid being the most represented region. About 12.5% of the experts (5 cases) declared that they have some type of disability, mainly a sensorial type.

Regarding profession, most of the participants worked in large companies (more than 100 employees) and occupied high positions of responsibility (area or department heads, middle management, or executive positions). Likewise, the experts provided information about people with disability in their work settings, reporting a higher presence of physical or intellectual disabilities (between 33% and 64%), ages mostly in the 35-to-44 age range, a predominance of administrative positions, and heterogeneous levels of training.

The data obtained from the two Delphi rounds were analysed, with a focus on whether a consensus was reached and evaluating changes in the answers between rounds to analyse the convergence in the perceptions of the experts. A consensus was defined as when more than 50% of the answers were similar (Prieto et al., 2019).

All the participants in the focus group and Delphi study took part voluntarily, without any contractual obligation or consideration other than for the research objectives. Their participation was carried out in accordance with the guidelines of the ESOMAR Code, which ensures the principles of ethics, transparency, confidentiality, and respect for the participants. Prior to the start of this study, all the participants signed the necessary participation and confidentiality agreements, in which they were duly informed of the objectives and design of the project and the processing procedures for personal data.

4. Results

Before presenting the most significant findings of this study and given the sequential nature of the methodological design, the results from the focus group are presented first as they were used to identify the main discourse topics, perceptions, and analytical categories concerning the labour inclusion of people with disabilities in the audiovisual industry. These results were used to design the Delphi questionnaire and structure the dimensions analysed in the next phase.

4.1. Focus Group Results

Based on the focus group, some essential themes emerged related to the labour inclusion of people with disabilities in the audiovisual industry: knowledge about the regulatory framework, perception of the motivations and barriers for hiring, different types of disability, and the role of digital technologies in the processes of labour integration.

With respect to the regulatory framework, it was not spontaneously mentioned in the focus group. However, when the topic was introduced, the participants recognised a certain lack of knowledge and confusion, especially related to the specific regulation of the audiovisual sector. One of the participants reported:

Disability regulations are combined with tax regulations, which change every three months; labour regulations; regulations for student interns; so, this legislative avalanche we face may make us a little distant from disability. (P2)

Likewise, those in the audiovisual sector also reported a lack of knowledge due to little experience in hiring disabled people: “Us companies have a certain lack of knowledge about disability, starting from the various laws, and maybe we are not on top of the things that we must be aware of” (P2).

In the group dynamics, the idea that people with disabilities can bring a different perspective to the workplace became prominent. In the audiovisual field, this benefit applies from an audience perspective and in the development of content, underlining their ability to understand problems and generate empathy within work groups. A representative of the researcher group underlined the contributions regarding accessibility:

I believe you become much more accessible when you have disable people under your employment, when you realize what they need. I understand that if a producer makes a movie and employs people with disabilities, the movie will without a doubt be accessible in some way. (P8)

The specialised associations insisted that disability is not incapacity, but a different type of capacity that could be especially productive in specific work contexts. In this regard, emphasis was placed on the importance of highlighting good practices for reducing prejudice and promoting hiring: “The visibility of good practices of certain companies when incorporating disabled people can help mitigate fear and distrust” (P5). Another participant provided some nuance: “Fears, lack of knowledge, prejudices when hiring. These are myths. When incorporated to work, it positively affects the work environment and adds value when you support inclusion” (P6).

Similarly, barriers were identified, especially in relation to the lack of knowledge and the lack of experience in hiring within the audiovisual sector. Employers in the audiovisual sector reported difficulties in defining adequate profiles and assessing the abilities of people with disabilities:

Some time ago it occurred to us to publish a subtitling position that we have externalised, and we would like to hire a disabled person for that department [...]. But we still do not know how to describe the profile for the post, to see what kind of training they could receive, and how they could perform the job. (P1)

Likewise, some attitudes of uncertainty derived from the lack of knowledge about the different types of disability were identified:

There is a lot of ignorance and also a certain degree of paternalism, that, well, you don't want to know or want to know more about which disability it is so you don't get into a mess...no to entrust some tasks a priori, due to their disability, they will not be able to perform it, or it will become a problem. (P2)

In addition, the discussion group pointed to the particularities of the audiovisual sector, characterised by temporary jobs, high pressure during production times, and high turnover, as factors that hinder the incorporation of disabled people:

The temporary nature of employment, and the fact that we cannot find technicians, or disabled people who have not risen among the professionals in the market, complicates it. Because the speed and the imperative need to launch a production and finish it on time makes it difficult to count on these people. (P2)

From the perspective of job portals, it was also stressed that most of the audiovisual projects require previous experience, and that the speed of selection processes limits the opening to those with less experience in this field:

In about 15 weeks, they must be able to develop a film; they need profiles with certain experience, profiles they already know. Why? Because in the end what they are guaranteeing is the efficiency of all the processes for such a frenetic pace [...]. It is not very often that they open the selection process in a job portal; it is always through pools of acquaintances or people who have already worked for them. (P4)

With respect to the types of disability, the focus group reported different perceptions depending on the type. In particular, intellectual and psychological disabilities were considered more complex regarding labour insertion, as they were associated with more support and supervision needs. The difficulties derived from a generalised lack of knowledge was underlined, such as how to interact or adapt to specific disabilities, which created insecurity among the employers:

People with wheelchairs or with a physical disability are more integrated at the level of work, but what is happening with the other disabilities? They give society fear. We don't know how to talk to a deaf person, how to treat a blind person, we don't know about their needs, and yeah, there's also the great unknown, intellectual disabilities. And of course, you as an employer are very afraid. (P8)

Nevertheless, the potential of these individuals for performing specialised tasks was also recognised, although some reluctance persisted that could hinder their effective integration.

The focus group also delved into the perception of the impact of digital technologies on labour inclusion, initially showing a certain scepticism that evolved towards a more favourable assessment throughout the discussion. They progressively recognised their potential as facilitators of labour integration: "I think so, that digital transformation is positive for this objective" (P1). The consensus opinion was that technologies are not barriers, but elements that favour inclusion in a society that is increasingly oriented towards personalisation and diversity rather than homogeneity.

Of the four sectors represented in the focus group, researchers were the most informed about the role of digital technologies and IA in labour integration regarding accessibility, both physical (adapted wheelchairs, artificial vision through vibrations, and the design and manufacture of digital objects using 3D printers, among others) and cognitive, underlining their capacity to create more inclusive environments:

Right now, in real time, subtitles are being added to any YouTube video. And that's nothing, wait until they integrate ChatGPT: it will not only translate it to your language, but it will simplify it to your skill level. (P7)

We cannot forget that the new technologies have not only improved the employability of disabled people [. . .]. We can create subtitles for deaf people, but this is also good for the elderly, children, and foreigners who are learning the language. (P8)

However, these same researchers warned about the existence of barriers created by the employers, either by default or through excessive demands:

The main barrier with respect to the technologies is that we assume that they should be used, or we assume that if they knew how to use them expertly, there wouldn't be any barriers. . . and both things are a lie [. . .]. Sometimes we also want to demand a level of efficiency that compensates for their functional diversity, and that cannot be, that's bad, I mean, that is their level of expectation, with their abilities. (P7)

The participants pointed out that the focus should be not on disability, but on different abilities:

In the case of disabled people, they need more support, but on the other hand, they have developed other sensibilities, other capacities, other skills. (P7)

I think it's great, this is what must be done, be completely proud of having this disability, which allows them to be diverse. Being diverse and being special within an integrative society. I believe that we all seek to be different, and we try to erase the subject of herds. (P8)

Likewise, it was emphasised that artificial intelligence can facilitate hiring access to people with disabilities by transforming selection processes and shifting the focus from previous experience to future potential:

The screening of the curriculums will be performed by artificial intelligence, but right now, that is, if they are not doing it already, they will do it. And this will not matter because in artificial intelligence there will only be. . . I mean, right now the selection processes are based on the maintenance of performance based on past performance, but this not the way it is now. Now it's about predicting future performance based on current data. (P7)

In this sense, the participants pointed out that AI is introducing a change in paradigm in the selection of human resources, in which a candidate's value is not derived from their past experience, but rather their future development. This approach could favour the labour insertion of people with disabilities, who historically have had fewer opportunities: "People with functional diversities have a higher potential for growth [. . .] because they have never had an option" (P7).

In summary, for the focus group participants, digital technologies, with AI at the helm, can positively contribute to the employability of people with disabilities, given that they can optimise processes and allow for better adaptation of their individual capacities: "If this artificial intelligence helps programs to optimise the process, then, well, it will definitely help accessibility a lot" (P4).

4.2. Delphi Results

The Delphi study allowed for comparison and synthesis of the perceptions collected from the focus group, as well as an analysis of the existing degree of agreement between the participating experts.

In this phase, we analysed the different aspects of the employability of disabled people in the audiovisual industry: levels of experience in hiring, regulatory knowledge, perceived motivations and barriers, and the impact attributed to digital technologies and AI.

Regarding previous experience in hiring people with disabilities, 30% of the participants admitted having considerable experience, with 60% of those working at job portals reporting considerable experience. Among the participants from the audiovisual sector, only 20% declared having "enough" or "a lot" of experience, while 30% reported having little, and 40% reported having no experience.

Despite having limited experience in hiring this group of people, the predisposition towards their labour incorporation was very favourable among the participants (87.5%), reaching 90.5% in the participants from the audiovisual industry. Therefore, these results demonstrated a generally positive attitude despite many having little experience in employing people with disabilities.

With respect to the current legislation, which requires 2% of the workforce in companies with more than 50 employees to comprise disabled people, approximately half of the Delphi participants claimed to be knowledgeable on this topic, while only 12.5% were unaware of the legislation. In the case of regulations specific to the audiovisual sector, the answers were directly related to previous experience in hiring.

Regarding motivations for hiring disabled people, meeting the legally established quotas and obtaining tax benefits were selected by 30% as the main reasons. Nevertheless, when all the options selected were grouped (each person surveyed could choose three), the most common motivations were the belief that work is the main means towards integration and that hiring disabled people contributes to overcoming prejudices.

As Figure 1 shows, the participants working in job portals, associations, and in research perceived access to work as the main mechanism of integration. However, for those working

in companies in the audiovisual sector, the most common reasons were helping to overcome prejudices (80%) and improving the workplace environment (80%).

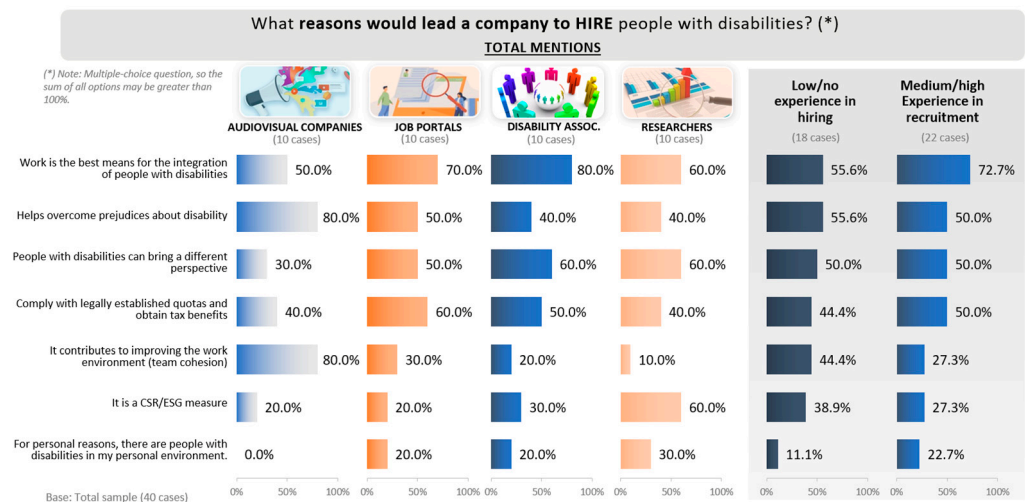


Figure 1. Results of the first round of the Delphi study: motivations for hiring people with disabilities. Source: created by the authors.

In the second round of the Delphi study, this trend was reinforced, with more participants believing that work is the main path towards integration (40%) and stating meeting the legal quotas and tax benefits (27.1%) as reasons for hiring people with disabilities. In the case of audiovisual companies, integration and the value of diversity were equally notable as key factors (49.2%).

With respect to the barriers that exist in hiring, the results from the first round highlighted a lack of confidence that people with disabilities will be able to perform the work as the main barrier (32.5%). However, when jointly considering the options selected (each expert could choose three), the most common recurring argument was the need to adapt the job to the person (67.5%).

In the second round, both reasons were given as the main barriers, though with higher concentrations of responses for these two factors. Among the participants from the audiovisual industry, both barriers were given the same weight (42.9%), while those working at job portals additionally underlined the lack of knowledge about the law as an important limitation. This is shown in Figure 2:

Regarding the difficulties faced by people with disabilities adapting to the work, the results from the first Delphi round showed a higher agreement that physical barriers and the demands of work performance are the main obstacles. In contrast, there were few participants that selected acceptance by peers and clients as difficulties. Similar to the overall group, the participants from the audiovisual industry also highlighted physical barriers and the demands of work performance as the most important factors hindering adaptation to the position.

In the second round, a change in perception was observed, with the demands of performing the work becoming the main difficulty, followed by physical barriers. Nevertheless, among the participants from audiovisual companies, physical barriers continued to be perceived as the main difficulty, with acceptance by peers and clients ranked second.

With respect to the impact of digital technologies in the labour insertion of disabled people, the Delphi results showed a mostly positive assessment. Overall, 85.7% of the participants believed that these technologies favour inclusion, reaching 100% in the case of those in the audiovisual industry. Nevertheless, emphasis was placed on the importance

of guaranteeing the accessibility of these technologies, an aspect with a strong agreement between all the participants (77.1%) and those in the audiovisual sector (85.7%).

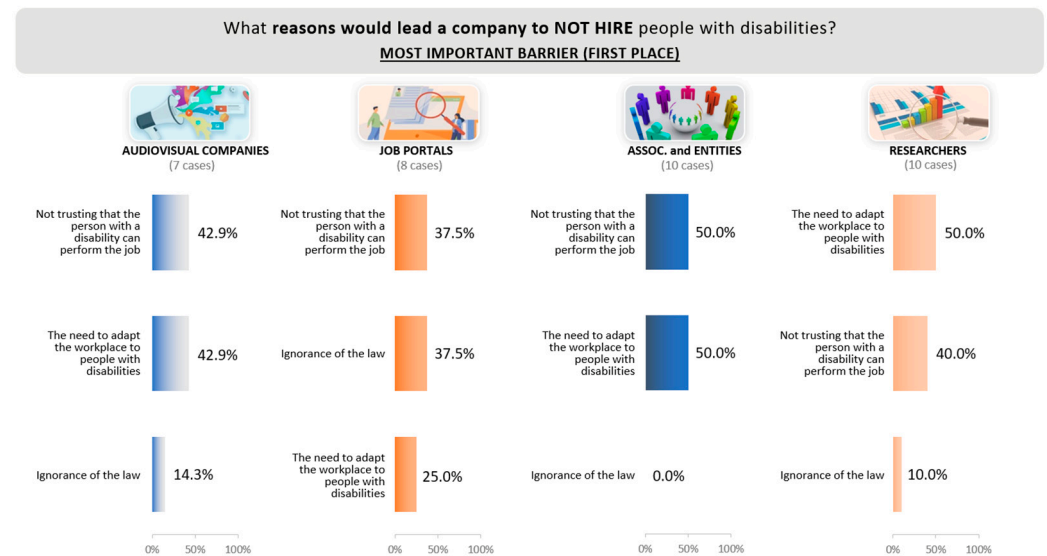


Figure 2. Results from second round of Delphi survey: barriers to hiring people with disabilities by sector. Source: created by the authors.

Regarding the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in improving the employment of this group, a consensus was reached as 54.3% of the experts believed that it could contribute to improving the employability of people with disabilities. This perception was more common among those working at audiovisual companies (71.4%) and job portals (75%). However, a certain distrust regarding its use in selection processes was detected as 51.4% of those surveyed believed that it could generate discriminatory effects.

With respect to telework, a strong consensus was established, with it being perceived as a factor that facilitates employability (77.1%). This consensus was higher among those working at audiovisual sector companies (85.7%). Nevertheless, those working at job portals gave a more moderate assessment (50%) and warned of possible risks regarding isolation or less integration. This is shown in Figure 3:

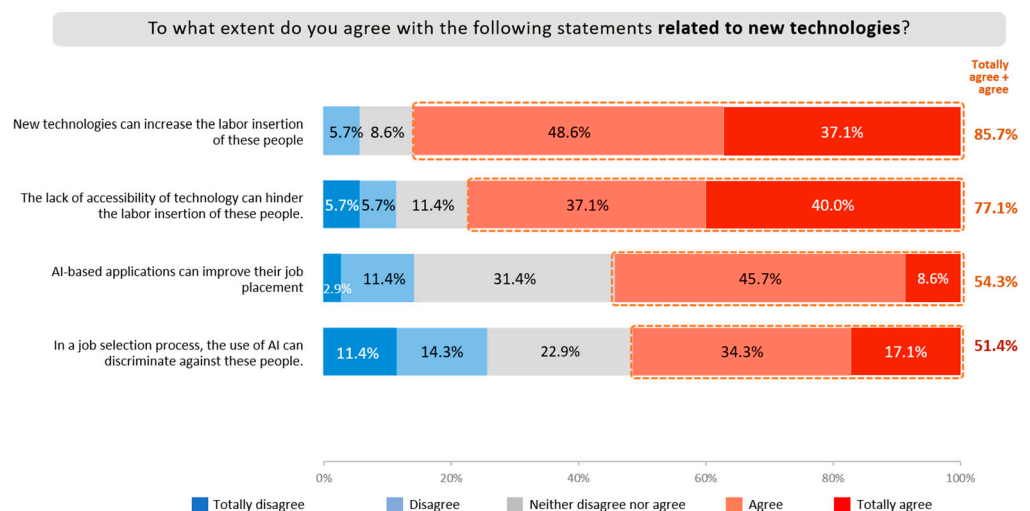


Figure 3. Results from the second round of the Delphi study: disability in the context of a digital society. Source: created by the authors.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

With respect to the first objective, which was centred on exploring the degree of knowledge and the perceptions of experts of the employability of people with disabilities, the present research revealed the existence of significant fears, distrust, and lack of knowledge when considering hiring these professionals.

The participants from the audiovisual sector expressed a lack of experience and prejudices. They complained that the temporal nature and the frenetic rhythm of the sector are limiting factors. Authors such as [Jiménez-Gómez et al. \(2021\)](#) argued that the rhythm of productions in cinema can sometimes make the integration of groups that require specialised attention more difficult. In addition, further research is needed to identify how different professional roles within the sector can be made accessible to people with diverse disabilities, including the adjustments and support required to enable their full participation, an aspect that should be a priority for normalisation.

It is important to highlight that despite the possible obstacles due to the dynamics of the deadlines for some media, the audiovisual sector encompasses much more than television and movies ([Perlado et al., 2021](#)). In fact, its reach extends to sub-sectors related to the production and consumption of digital content, the digital environment, and the production of animation, videogames, advertising, and social networks, among others. This environment already represents 28.3% of the cultural industry and 2.4% of the Spanish GDP according to a report by [Price Waterhouse Coopers and Pate Productores Audiovisuales \(2021, p. 20\)](#). Therefore, the existing scenario could be favourable for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

With respect to the second objective, which aimed to identify the motivations of and barriers perceived by companies in hiring disabled people, our study showed that operational difficulties are the main obstacle, aligning with previous studies conducted in English-speaking contexts ([Berghs & Dyson, 2022](#); [Qu, 2022](#); [Ellis, 2016](#); [Sang et al., 2022](#)), as well as in Spain ([Sánchez-Valle et al., 2019](#); [Viñarás et al., 2021](#)). The most commonly identified barriers were the demands of work performance and the difficulties derived from physical and technological accessibility. However, along with these limitations, we found that the motivations were favourable for hiring. The experts believed that work performance is the best path towards the social inclusion of people with disabilities. It is expected that these individuals will provide different perspectives on the audiovisual market and improve the workplace environment. The legally associated tax benefits are also considered.

Therefore, an ableist vision persists that continues to frame people within standard patterns, as was described by [Campbell \(2009\)](#), which has not been completely overcome. Along with it is a willingness to focus on what each person can contribute beyond the disability, seeking a full integration, which is in agreement with the vision of the Social Model of Disability formulated by [Oliver \(1998\)](#) and centred on respect towards diversity.

Regarding the third objective, which was focused on the perceptions of and attitudes towards different types of disability and their impact on employment opportunities, the results demonstrated a clear hierarchy of the probability of labour insertion based on the type of disability. Intellectual disabilities were perceived as the greatest obstacles, followed by psychological disabilities. In contrast, sensorial and organic disabilities were not considered limiting, and only 8.6% ranked physical disabilities as first. The data from the [INE \(2022\)](#) corroborate this perception, with hearing disabilities recording the highest rate of being reported as major difficulties (55.5%) and intellectual disabilities the lowest (27.5%). Visual and organic disabilities had rates higher than 40%. It is important to highlight this point as the work of authors such as [Zamorano et al. \(2024\)](#), [Laborda et al.](#)

(2021) and Jariot et al. (2020) identified prejudice and a lack of previous work experience as factors with a significant impact on the inclusion of people with disabilities.

This trend is different among those employed in the audiovisual sector. They believe that those with physical disabilities can adapt the best, followed by those with organic disabilities. Sensorial disabilities are viewed negatively in industry, and those with intellectual disabilities are perceived as less capable. The results of Viñarás et al. centred on the field of corporate communication align with our findings, with their participants stating that those with physical disabilities are able “if having the necessary adaptations” (2021, p. 10).

Regarding the fourth objective of this study, which was to analyse the perception of experts of the impact of technology and artificial intelligence on the employability of people with disabilities, our results demonstrated a positive response overall. Authors such as De Oliveira et al. (2021) recognised their potential for inclusion in every field, which is the same posture taken by the audiovisual company participants, with 100% holding this belief.

However, digital tools can become another barrier if they are not accessible. The audiovisual industry is especially affected by this aspect, as pointed out by McDonald and Clayton (2013) and Herrero et al. (2022) and verified by Tsatsou (2021), Watling (2011), and Palmer et al. (2012), with the latter focusing on intellectual disability. In addition, a report by the Fundación Adecco (2022) found that more than half of those consulted found technical accessibility problems with technology. However, a similar percentage declared that the adapted tools have allowed them to finish their studies and/or obtain employment. Accessible technology can also benefit other population groups, such as the elderly.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is perceived as a valuable resource for the employment of disabled people. AI represents a paradigm shift, with an approach that is more oriented towards the future than to the past. However, the participants working at job portals showed a certain reluctance to use it in selection processes. This concern is reflected in the report by the Fundación Adecco (2021), which warns about possible biases when automating selection processes.

Regarding the contribution of remote work to improving employability, this study revealed a strong consensus on a positive role, particularly among those employed at audiovisual companies, while those working at job portals showed a weaker agreement, backing the arguments by Meshur and Ulusoy (2013). However, some risks have been raised regarding online socialisation, such as the concern about isolation expressed by Qu (2022). While disabled people have a favourable view of remote work, there are variations depending on the type of disability, with those with physical disabilities being the main proponents of this work practice (Fundación Adecco, 2022).

There are limitations to this study. First, it was based on the opinions of specialised experts and stakeholders from different fields, and therefore lacks ecological validity. Second, in the second Delphi round, five dropouts occurred (out of forty questionnaires), affecting the consensus on the themes.

In the future, research should focus on the competencies that are the most valuable to employers in the audiovisual sector, and the adaptations needed to train people with disabilities. These people, just like any professional, must prepare to face the challenges of this expanding sector. However, learning and training must be accessible and adapted to their circumstances. Future work should continue to contribute to the labour insertion of this group within the framework of a more equitable society.

A second line of research in the future could address the dilemmas raised by AI and its various applications. On the one hand, it may help to make tools more accessible, but at the same time, it may replace people in certain tasks or further exacerbate discrimination against people with disabilities in recruitment processes.

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