



ISSUE 11

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The Valuable 500 Global Trends Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Identifying the most notable trends in the
period March — May 2023



KEY TRENDS

- 01 Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) 2023.**
Businesses celebrated the annual event the right way, by announcing commitments to improving digital accessibility.
- 02 Representation 'firsts'.**
This quarter saw disabled people represented in new ways, from Vogue's Disability Issue to Barbie's first doll with Down syndrome.
- 03 AI-enabled inclusion.**
We are now witnessing the ways artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, can be used to benefit people with disabilities.
- 04 Accessible tourism goes global.**
More countries around the world are joining the conversation around accessible travel, from Greece to Costa Rica and South Korea.
- 05 Inclusive technology enables new experiences.**
Innovation is making experiences like photography and playing a musical instrument available to some disabled people for the first time.

- 06 Big brands challenge perceptions of disability.**
From reclaiming the word 'disability' to the autism gender gap, leading brands are helping to raise awareness and challenge stereotypes.
- 07 New research reveals insights on disabled workers.**
Businesses like Boston Consulting Group and Mastercard are helping to bridge the disability data gap with insightful new studies.
- 08 Social media drives conversations about accessibility.**
People and brands are using platforms like TikTok and Twitter to raise awareness about accessibility problems and solutions.
- 09 Business leaders speak up about their disabilities.**
Leaders at major organisations are starting to share their experiences of living with a disability and the importance of inclusive leadership.
- 10 Representation on TV remains a focus.**
TV bosses in Europe and Asia Pacific are helping to maintain scrutiny on the industry to promote disability representation.



LET'S DISCUSS

The importance of inclusive leadership



Disability and leadership.

Diversity, inclusion and representation are among the most critical leadership challenges facing businesses today.

Companies around the world are seeking to include more women, people of colour, and members of the LGBTQ+ community in the boardroom. Indeed, businesses that fail to prioritise management diversity are increasingly becoming outliers. So why is it that the diversity discussion almost never includes leaders with disabilities?

Over 1.3 billion, or 16% of the world's population, lives with a disability, and according to a study from the **Centre for Talent Innovation (CTI)**, 30% of white-collar professionals in the United States are disabled. Yet, despite being the world's largest minority group, and the only one that a person could join at any time in life, disability remains largely underrepresented at the executive level.

Over the last few years, more companies have begun to implement policies focused on creating inclusive routes into the workforce and improving working cultures and practices for disabled employees. However, these rarely focus on the inclusion and promotion of people with disabilities in the senior leadership ranks.

30% of white-collar professionals in the US are disabled.

3% of leaders would speak out openly about their disability / caring role.

46% of employers don't report on the number of disabled employees.

In fact, according to a landmark report published by **Heidrick & Struggles**, there is a widespread belief among senior executives that there are no people with disabilities in leadership positions.

One explanation for this is a lack of data, as many diversity reporting metrics do not include disability. Research involving 501 HR decision makers, conducted by **GRiD**, found that almost half (46%) of employers do not report on the number of people with disabilities they employ. This makes it hard to quantify just how many leaders have a disability.

Another reason is that many business leaders with disabilities have had to hide the existence of their disabilities to succeed at work. Recent research from **the Valuable 500** shows that only 3% of leaders would speak out openly about their disability or caregiving role. So, while disability may technically be represented at leadership level, it is rarely discussed, highlighted or championed.

Finally, many senior executives do not have a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be disabled. Definitions of disability vary from country to country, and with such a broad range of conditions falling under the umbrella of disability, many executives do not realise that their colleagues, or indeed they themselves, may be included underneath it.

As a result, many C-Suite leaders may have never taken the time to think about the topic of disability at all, let alone how a disability could be an asset in a leader, or how the company might benefit from more inclusive leadership. But the arguments for improving representation at leadership level are compelling, and in 2023, many businesses are already reaping the rewards of investing in disabled leaders.

Why do we need disabled leaders?

Numerous studies document the value of diversity and inclusion in leadership. In fact, Accenture found that companies that embraced best practices for employing and supporting people with disabilities specifically achieved 28% higher revenue, double the net income and 30% higher economic profit margins over a four-year period.

However, there has been much less focus on exploring why disability-inclusive businesses perform better, particularly when it comes to the value of disabled representation at leadership level.

Unique perspectives and skills

Like other minority groups, employees with disabilities bring unique perspectives and life experiences to the table. A recent study from the **CTI** found that three-quarters of employees with disabilities report having ideas that would drive value for their companies, compared to only two-thirds of employees without disabilities. Many people with disabilities navigate life in a world not designed for them. As a result, they must devise problem-solving strategies, develop hacks, find new communication strategies, and demonstrate resilience on a daily basis.

These skills are vital in leadership roles, and consequently people with disabilities may have unique leadership qualities relative to their non-disabled colleagues.

In addition, as the world becomes more reliant on automation/AI and routinised jobs are becoming more redundant, the ability of individuals with disabilities to think outside the box and contribute fresh thinking to their organisations could be putting them in the forefront of today's changing nature of work.

3/4

employees with disabilities report having ideas that would drive value for their companies.



”

From our interviews and focus groups, we have learned that people with disabilities are particularly innovative. In order to navigate the world with a disability, they have to problem-solve each day.

Julia Taylor Kennedy, Executive Vice President and Director of Publications, CTI

Insight into a growing market

Disabled people understand the needs and experiences of disabled consumers, a group with an estimated disposable income of US\$13 trillion per annum according to the **2020 Return on Disability Report**. That figure is also likely to increase in the future, as the number of disabled people grows 'through population growth, medical advances and the ageing process' (**World Health Organization**).

In order to impact growth, people with disabilities need to be given the opportunity to help develop products and services. Companies with disabled leadership can therefore benefit from valuable insights on solutions targeting an underserved consumer market.

Make-up artist Terri Bryant started **Guide Beauty**, a brand that caters to users with all levels of make-up abilities, after being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Bryant saw her diagnosis as an opportunity to understand the perspective of people who struggle to use cosmetics and beauty tools. **Us Magazine** named Guide Beauty as one of the best beauty product launches of 2020, and in 2021 they won in the **iF DESIGN AWARD** User Experience category, showing that the lived experience of disability can be a powerful asset for a business leader.



Through this new lens, I began to rethink makeup and how we apply it.

Terri Bryant, Guide Beauty Founder



10%
of Disability:IN members now have documents governing the nomination of directors that mention disability.

Changing with the times

Ensuring disabled representation at leadership level will also help companies prepare for a future in which corporate diversity standards are more stringent.

Around the world, businesses are increasingly required to illustrate that they are working to include people with disabilities. For example, in March 2023 the Japanese government announced that companies will be legally obliged to provide necessary services and infrastructure to assist people with disabilities from April 2024. Disabled leaders can help companies adapt to these new requirements and thus manage risk.

Research also shows there is a growing trend towards improving disabled representation at leadership level. **Disability:IN's** 2022 Disability Equality Index (DEI) revealed that 10% of Disability:IN members surveyed now have documents that govern the nomination of board directors that specifically mention disability, and in April 2023 **Lloyds Banking Group** became the first UK bank to announce a public goal to increase the representation of senior colleagues with disabilities in the workplace, from 6% to 12%. This suggests that companies that fail to adapt now may risk falling behind their peers.

Improving employee engagement

“You cannot be what you cannot see” is a commonly cited reason for increasing representation at the top of organisations. When employees with disabilities see disabled leaders succeeding and sharing their experiences, it can have a profound impact on their engagement.

People with disabilities report lower levels of inclusion in the workplace relative to their colleagues without disabilities. According to **Boston Consulting Group (BCG)**'s BLISS (Bias-Free, Leadership, Inclusion, Safety and Support) Index, which measures feelings of inclusion, the average score for disabled people is 3 points lower than the average score for those without a disability or health condition.

These findings matter because lower feelings of inclusion are correlated with higher attrition. Improving an employee's feelings of inclusion increases the likelihood that they will stay with the organisation. In today's environment of low unemployment and costly hiring and training, the economic impact on organisations can be substantial. But disabled representation at leadership level can help to improve these engagement rates.

Across countries surveyed, PwD have lower inclusion scores—3 points lower, on average



The average BLISS Index score¹ for nondisabled workers is 65

Steve Ingham, who was CEO of **PageGroup** from 2006 to 2022, was the only CEO in the FTSE 250 to disclose a disability. Following a skiing accident in 2019, in which he was paralysed, Steve recorded a video message explaining the situation to his employees and realised that his lived experience of disability actually strengthened him as a leader, saying “far from lowering my respect in the business, it was actually raising it”. Steve is now using his platform to champion changes in the UK workplace to help others with disabilities.



Similarly, when **EY**'s Julie Linn Teigland shared that she is partially deaf, she noticed the immediate positive change it created within the company's culture. Julie's openness about her own disability encouraged colleagues with disabilities to be more transparent about their own experience, helping to foster a more inclusive working environment across the organisation.

“
In the past, I have shared my own experience with EY teams, and I found that voluntarily coming forward makes a huge difference. That transparency creates a recognition that 'we see you' and that you belong.

Julie Linn Teigland, EMEA Area Managing Partner, EY

How can businesses improve leadership representation?

There are many ways in which businesses can bolster inclusive leadership within their own organisations and the wider business ecosystem.

Sharing stories

Leaders who self-identify and speak up about their experience can provide positive role models for other aspiring leaders with disabilities and help to break down negative connotations about disability in the workplace. When leaders are open about their disabilities, it can also help to influence business strategies, shape policies and promote safe spaces for disabled employees to thrive.

Recently, Jun Sawada, Chairman of the board of **Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT)**, talked publicly about his experience of keratoconus, an eye condition which causes irregularities in the corneas that result in vision loss.



It is important that conveners in positions of power should look for ways to address these issues and support the disabled population.

Jun Sawada, Chairman of the Board, NTT



OriHime-D robots deliver drinks in a cafe: NTT uses the robots to enable seamless remote communication to facilitate flexible working and support staff with disabilities © Reuters

NTT is now working with disabled employees who, because of the company's inclusive culture, feel confident contributing to business growth.

The company has introduced a new communications initiative called IOWN, incorporating an innovative robot that enables seamless remote communication to facilitate flexible working and support staff with disabilities.

Such initiatives demonstrate the tangible impact of disabled leaders sharing their own experiences.

Bringing in new perspectives

Many companies have achieved strategic success by actively appointing disabled people to leadership positions. These leaders bring new perspectives, expertise, and experience to the company's management structure.

Sam Latif, who is blind, currently serves as **P&G's** Accessibility Leader, a position that was created for her. In her 21 years at the company, Sam has worked on some of the most impactful examples of accessible beauty product design: **Olay's** new Easy Open Lids and, for blind and low-vision consumers, **Herbal Essences'** tactile markers and **Clearblue's** Be My Eyes app (through which pregnancy results can be read to consumers).

Since hiring Sam, P&G has become a leader in inclusive design, demonstrating just how impactful it can be to invest in disabled leaders.

“
When we've interviewed consumers like me, we've found that they felt the beauty industry didn't really reach out to them. So, one version of a day is just talking to consumers with disabilities: 'What are some of the frustrations that you've got?' That way I can understand how to bring those to P&G to meet their needs.

Sam Latif, Accessibility Leader, P&G



Executive summary

Let's discuss

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Regional perspectives

Conclusion



Other companies have found success via different leadership models. In 2021, **L'Oréal** launched its Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Board, assembling a diverse group of external experts and members of the company's leadership to foster open discussion on how to strengthen L'Oréal's commitments and contribute to its action plan.

Earlier this year, L'Oréal launched a handheld, computerised lipstick applicator called 'Hapta', designed for people with limited hand and arm mobility. This was the first product of its kind from a major cosmetics company, illustrating how inclusive leadership can help to drive innovation.

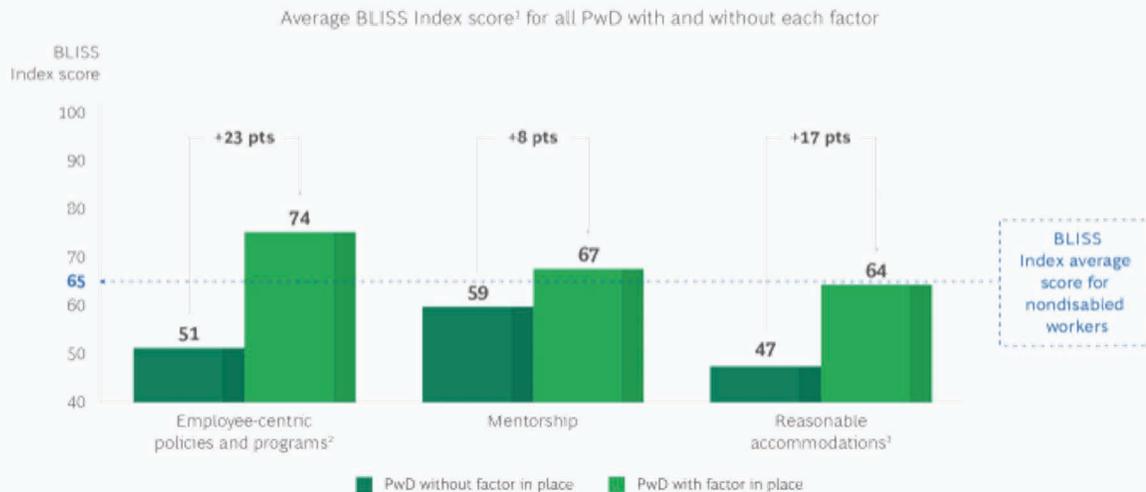


Mentoring the next generation

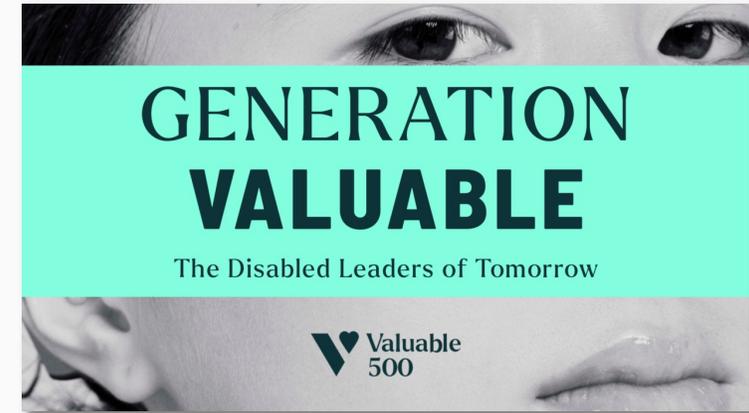
Research shows that marginalised talent often faces systemic barriers to promotion. However, mentorship can transform the experience of disabled people in the workplace: improving engagement, increasing retention, and helping people perform better in their current role and progress in their careers.

Mentoring creates a virtuous cycle: nurturing a pool of leaders with disabilities who can share their experiences, advocate for other employees with disabilities, serve as examples of success to more junior colleagues, and act as mentors to future generations. **BCG** found that the BLISS Index score for mentored people with disabilities is nearly 8 points higher than that of disabled employees without a mentor. This is in stark contrast to the average score for people with disabilities, which is 3 points lower than that of non-disabled employees, proving how impactful mentoring can be.

Employee-centric policies, mentorship, and reasonable accommodations significantly boost feelings of inclusion for PwD



Sources: [Boston Consulting Group \(BCG\)](#), [the Valuable 500](#)



Programmes such as **the Valuable 500's** 'Generation Valuable' aim to address the gap in disability talent, at all levels, by creating an opportunity for leaders from Valuable 500 companies to receive training provided by some of the world's leading disability inclusion and leadership development experts, as well as an internal executive mentor. The initiative aims to help chart new pathways to C-Suite level for disabled people and has so far enlisted a full Year 1 cohort, made up of 75 of the world's largest businesses from every continent.



Supporting disabled entrepreneurs

Large companies can help to improve leadership representation by supporting entrepreneurs with disabilities via investment and incubation. According to a new report from **Small Business Britain**, supported by **Lloyds Bank**, disabled entrepreneurs face significant barriers to start and grow businesses and major systemic changes are needed to make entrepreneurship more equitable, accessible, and inclusive for disabled founders.

The 'Disability and Entrepreneurship report' – which consulted over 500 disabled and neurodiverse founders across the UK – revealed an abundance of inbuilt entrepreneurial skill and ambition among this cohort, with 35% saying their disability has positively impacted them as an entrepreneur.

“
My success didn't come despite my challenge — it came because of it. Being faced with adversity caused me to build strong muscles in the three most critical skills of entrepreneurship: resilience, unconventional thinking and empathy.

Zach Cutler, VC-Backed Tech Founder

Santen, in partnership with **One Young World**, launched the Lead2030 Challenge on “Closing the Disability Employment Gap.” They invited applications from young innovators who are working on sustainable, market-ready, and scalable solutions that have demonstrated meaningful impact for the employability of people with disabilities. The winner of the challenge was Bonny Dave, the founder of **Trestle Labs** – an assistive technology company that enables schools and workplaces to be digitally inclusive.



However, significant hurdles are holding founders back, including higher start-up costs and challenges accessing funding, as well as a lack of support from wider society.

A new report by the campaign group **Access2Funding** found that 84% of disabled entrepreneurs believe they don't have equal access to the same opportunities and resources as non-disabled entrepreneurs.

The report also highlighted the loss to the investment ecosystem, stating that investors are missing out on an estimated £500m in annual returns by not backing these entrepreneurs.

This issue is not unique to the UK, and prevents disabled entrepreneurs worldwide from scaling their businesses effectively. However, large companies have an opportunity and a responsibility to invest in disabled-led companies, in order to help create the next generation of leaders with disabilities.



THE GLOBAL VIEW

*Analysis of notable moves,
changes or development at
a global level*

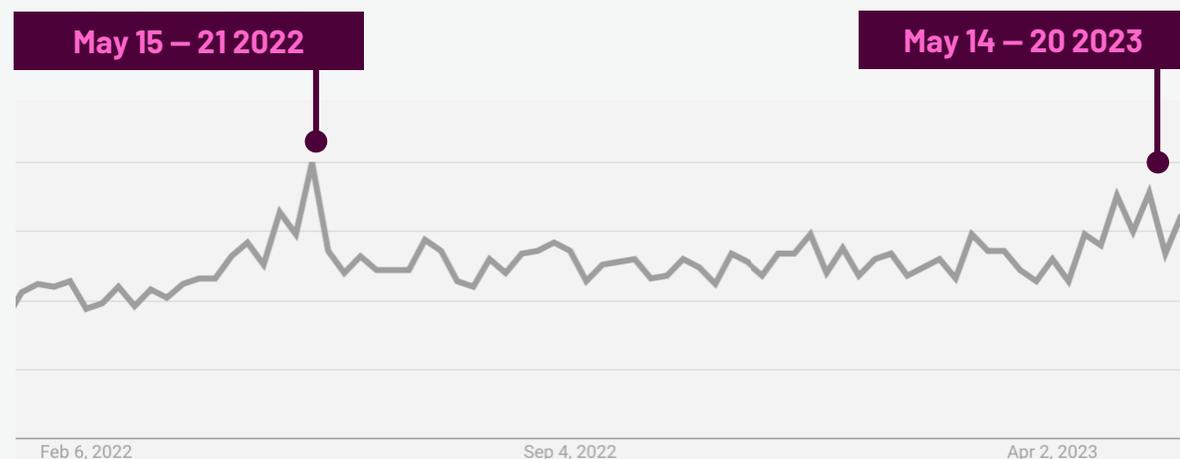


Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) 2023.

GAAD, celebrated annually on the third Thursday in May, serves to raise awareness of the importance of digital access and inclusion for over one billion people who live with disabilities globally.

Thursday, May 18, 2023 marked the 12th Global Accessibility Awareness Day. 'Keeping technology accessible for everyone' was the key theme of GAAD 2023, and in an era when technology impacts almost every aspect of our lives, this message has never been more important.

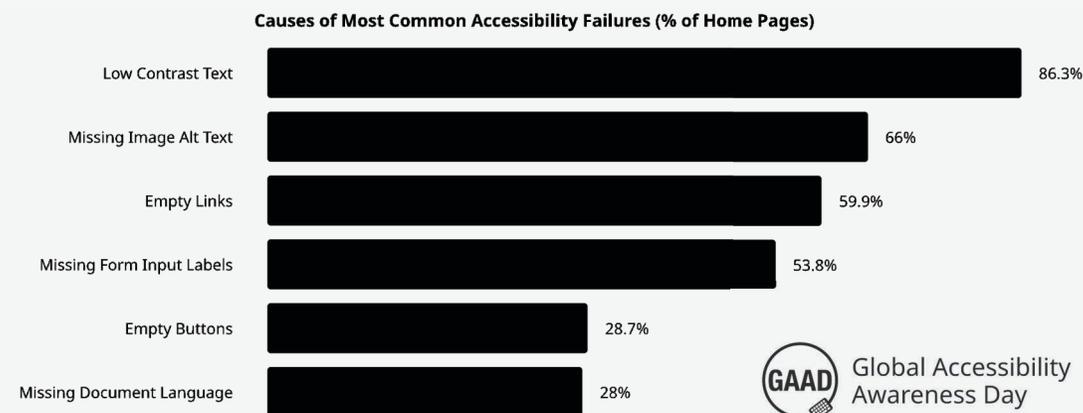
However, analysis of **Google** Trends data from December 2021 – June 2023 shows that interest in GAAD worldwide has declined since last year. In 2022 'GAAD' reached a value of 100 – the peak popularity for a term – whereas in 2023, the term only reached a value of 90:



Sources: [Google Trends](#), [Global Accessibility Awareness Day](#), [TPGi](#)

Annual celebrations like GAAD are a vital way to raise awareness of this important issue, as many websites and digital platforms remain inaccessible to people with disabilities.

In 2020, **WebAIM** analysed one million home pages for accessibility issues and found that 98.1% had at least one WCAG 2.0 failure and the average number of errors per home page was 60.9.



But governments around the world are introducing new legislation to improve digital accessibility. The **European Accessibility Act (EAA)** is a law designed to create equal access for Europeans with disabilities by requiring a mix of products and services to be accessible, replacing a patchwork of different rules with standardised accessibility requirements. Each country's EAA laws must come into force on June 28, 2025, so companies must act now to ensure their digital products and services are compliant ahead of the deadline.

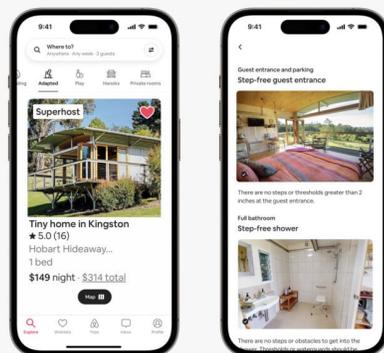
GAAD 2023 (continued).

Businesses can play a major role in advocating for digital accessibility by celebrating GAAD annually and using the opportunity to commit to improving the accessibility of their products and services for disabled people.

Airbnb

On May 18, Airbnb announced that it has now reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of almost 300,000 accessibility features in homes around the world. Introduced in November 2021, Accessibility Review gives guests the peace of mind that accessibility features added by Hosts have been reviewed and confirmed by Airbnb agents. Since its launch, the number of listings with an accessibility feature on Airbnb has increased by over 450% to over 140,000 places to stay.

Airbnb also launched the Adapted category this year, a curated list of spaces that include verified accessibility features. The category now boasts over 1,100 listings across the globe, with Hosts earning over \$8.2 million AUD since launch.



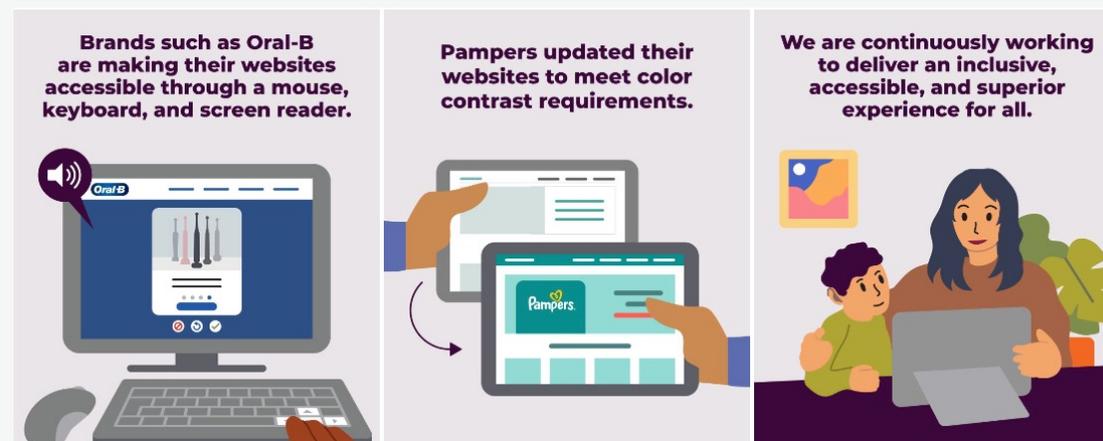
Sources: [Airbnb](#), [P&G](#)

P&G

In their latest initiative – Reset the Bar in Advertising Accessibility – P&G have partnered with the **World Federation of Advertisers**, media owners, TV sales houses and other key industry partners to promote progress towards 100% advertising accessibility across Europe by 2025.

For GAAD, P&G shared that across all its channels, including e-commerce sites, the company is ensuring alt-text and video descriptions are built in. P&G also shared how it is acting with its brands to improve digital accessibility:

- **Oral-B has made its site more accessible through a mouse, keyboard, and screen reader, significantly enhancing the experience for low-vision, blind and neurodivergent consumers.**
- **Pampers has updated its sites to ensure colour-blind people have equal access to essential information.**



GAAD 2023 (continued).

For GAAD 2023, many well-known companies announced new accessible products and features to improve the user experience for their disabled consumers.

Microsoft

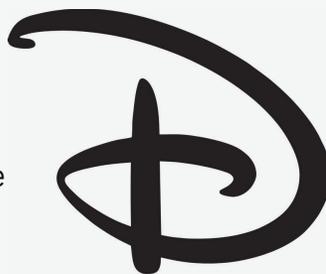
Microsoft announced a variety of initiatives, such as ongoing accessibility support with video games and an update to the accessibility features on its Office suite, which will now include enhanced narrator support for Excel and a new and improved accessibility ribbon for Mac and PC.

The company also announced an update to its long-standing partnership with **Be My Eyes**, a smartphone app for blind and low vision users. Microsoft aims to take customer support to the next level by launching a new pilot programme to add GPT-4-powered functionality to its Disability Answer Desk.



Disney

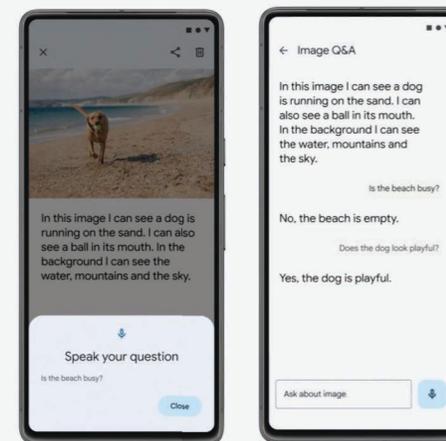
Disney and **ESPN** are bringing their Real-Time Automated Speech Recognition (ASR) to more of their programming. This will improve captions for real-time events like sports, live TV and news. Of their events captioned using ASR in the past year, they have seen a 97% caption accuracy rate.



Sources: [Usable Net](#), [Microsoft](#), [Be My Eyes](#), [9 to 5 Google](#), [Mobile Syrup](#)

Google

Google released updates to its existing live captioning feature, extending the capability to tablets. In addition, Google is adding a Q&A feature in Lookout, which aims to identify and describe images with alt-text and allows the user to ask questions about the image.



Apple

Apple unveiled several upcoming accessibility features, including a detection mode that uses the camera to help identify physical, real-world objects, live speech that allows users to text what they want to say and have it read aloud in their voice, and a new assistive access feature that helps people with cognitive disabilities navigate apps better.



Mattel launches Barbie with Down syndrome.

Barbie is launching its first doll with Down syndrome to enable more children to find a toy that represents them.

The company partnered with medical experts and the **National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS)** in the US to inform the design process of the new doll, introducing a new face and body sculpt to be more illustrative of women with Down syndrome, including a shorter frame and a longer torso.

Part of its Fashionistas range, which includes dolls who use wheelchairs, prosthetic limbs, and hearing aids, this doll is the first to represent someone with a learning disability.

The doll's necklace, featuring three upward chevrons, represents the three copies of the 21st chromosome, which is the genetic material that causes the characteristics associated with Down syndrome. The doll's dress pattern also features butterflies and yellow and blue colours, which are associated with Down syndrome awareness.

Mattel bosses said they wanted to develop the doll to "enable all children to see themselves in Barbie" and the move was widely praised by charities. Ellie Goldstein, a British model with Down syndrome who appears in an advertising campaign for the new Barbie, also said she was happy to see the doll, commenting "diversity is important to me as people need to see more people like me out there in the world and not be hidden away."

However, reception to the doll's launch has been mixed, with some people expressing the view that Mattel could have gone even further with the design, in order to more accurately represent people with Down syndrome.

Sources: [The Guardian](#), [Sky News](#), [National Review](#)



This means so much for our community, who for the first time can play with a Barbie doll that looks like them.

Kandi Pickard, Chief Executive and President, NDSS

ChatGPT empowers people with disabilities.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is now transforming our world and having a significant impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

AI-driven programmes such as **ChatGPT** are beginning to provide solutions for disabled people: helping to bridge communication gaps, facilitate access to information and foster independence.

Some of the ways AI is capable of supporting people with disabilities are:

- **Enhancing communication:** AI chatbots can significantly aid communication for people with hearing or speech disabilities, by converting speech to text and vice versa, allowing users to engage in conversations and participate in social interactions they may have otherwise found challenging.
- **Reading and writing assistance:** By reading aloud text-based content or providing writing suggestions, ChatGPT can help users with dyslexia compose emails, essays and other documents with greater ease and efficiency.
- **Supporting education:** By answering questions, providing explanations and offering alternative learning materials, ChatGPT can serve as an invaluable resource for learners who may require additional support or accommodations.

One of the most significant benefits of ChatGPT for people with disabilities is its ability to understand and respond to natural language queries. For people who have difficulty typing or using a keyboard, the chatbot offers a more accessible way to interact with technology.

Sources: [Entrepreneur](#), [CS Monitor](#), [LinkedIn](#)

AI can help remove many of the barriers disabled people face in their daily lives. As the technology continues to improve, we can expect to see even more innovative ways that ChatGPT can be used to improve accessibility and inclusion for all.

However, the chatbot has already been banned by many education providers and more than 6,000 teachers from universities including **Harvard** and **Yale** have signed up to use **GPTZero**, a programme that claims to detect AI-generated text.

At present, AI isn't perfect but it has already demonstrated positive use cases for the disabled community. As ChatGPT stirs debate over the use of technology and AI in education, disabled students and educators have said the benefits should not be overlooked in a rush to regulate.

**We shouldn't assume the technology is bad.
We need to move quickly and put in
place strong policies and protections
for educators and students.**

**Leslie Loble, Professor at the University of Technology,
Sydney**

Rare Beauty sparks critical conversation about inclusivity.

A series of TikTok videos about Selena Gomez's makeup line has started an online discussion about the beauty industry's lack of inclusivity.

When someone posted a video on **TikTok** saying that **Rare Beauty's** liquid blush, a product from Selena Gomez's makeup line, "sucks" because it "gets everywhere" when you open it, Christen Roos decided to share how much the packaging means to her as someone with short arms. Unlike other makeup products that have grippless handles, this particular blush has a circular lid that makes it easy to twist.

Christen's reaction video got nearly 15 million views and sparked a critical conversation around inclusivity in the beauty industry. Other people with disabilities, ranging from visual impairments to rheumatoid arthritis and limb difference, have also noticed Rare Beauty's accessibility and have used TikTok to advocate for its unique features. Some products have a matte finish for better grip, flat edges to prevent rolling, and easy-to-press buttons with pop-up features.

A statement on Rare Beauty's website notes that its products are "designed to Selena's personal preferences to emphasise ease of use". Selena Gomez has lupus – an autoimmune disease that tricks the immune system into attacking itself – so she often experiences muscle weakness, shaky hands, and other mobility issues.

Influencer Mariadeliz Santiago, who has Schnitzel syndrome, says that other than Rare Beauty, she's not aware of any other mainstream makeup brands prioritising accessibility, but she hopes that the company will set a new standard in the industry, and lead to more affordable drugstore products on the market for people with disabilities.

Sources: [Buzzfeed](#)



I'm always surprised when something is easy to open, but it should all be easy to open. So when I bought this Rare Beauty blush, I was amazed.

Christen Roos

 Rare Beauty



Boston Consulting Group (BCG) publishes Diversity, Equity and Inclusion report.

The report, entitled 'Your Workforce Includes People with Disabilities. Does Your People Strategy?' analyses survey data from 28,000 employees in 16 countries.

Most organisations say their workforce includes relatively few people with disabilities: just 4% to 7%. But in **BCG's** survey, some 25% of people said they have a disability or health condition that limits a major life activity. The survey found that:

- Employees with disabilities significantly under-disclose to their employers, so organisations are missing out on helping employees with disabilities bring their full selves to work. However, employers can increase feelings of inclusion by making employees comfortable disclosing their disability.
- Organisations can foster greater feelings of inclusion for disabled people by providing employee-centric policies and programmes, mentorship, and reasonable accommodations.

BCG's BLISS (Bias-Free, Leadership, Inclusion, Safety, and Support) Index provides a quantitative window to understand the workplace experience of employees with disabilities. The Index provides a single, comprehensive score that reflects feelings of inclusion. Scores range from 1 to 100 and are based on rigorous statistical modelling.

Unsurprisingly, disabled people report lower levels of inclusion in the workplace relative to their colleagues without disabilities: the average BLISS Index score for people with disabilities is 3 points lower than the average score for those without a disability or health condition. These findings hold true across the countries included in the research.

Beyond differences in BLISS Index scores, the survey also found that disabled people are having a more negative work experience than their non-disabled peers.

Compared to non-disabled people, people with disabilities are:

6 percentage points less likely to indicate that they are happy at work.

15 percentage points more likely to say that work negatively impacts their mental and physical wellbeing, and their relationships with friends and family.

1.5 times more likely to have experienced discrimination at their organisation.



REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Europe | Asia Pacific | North America
South America | Middle East and Africa



Regional perspectives

North America

Big brands have made important commitments to inclusion in the areas of representation and technology, while new research continues the conversation on accessible travel.

Europe

Brands are making bold moves to improve disability representation in fashion, challenge stereotypes of neurodiversity and raise awareness around accessibility.

Asia Pacific

Technology is in development to provide people with disabilities more independence, while research and activism continue to push for disability inclusion in society.

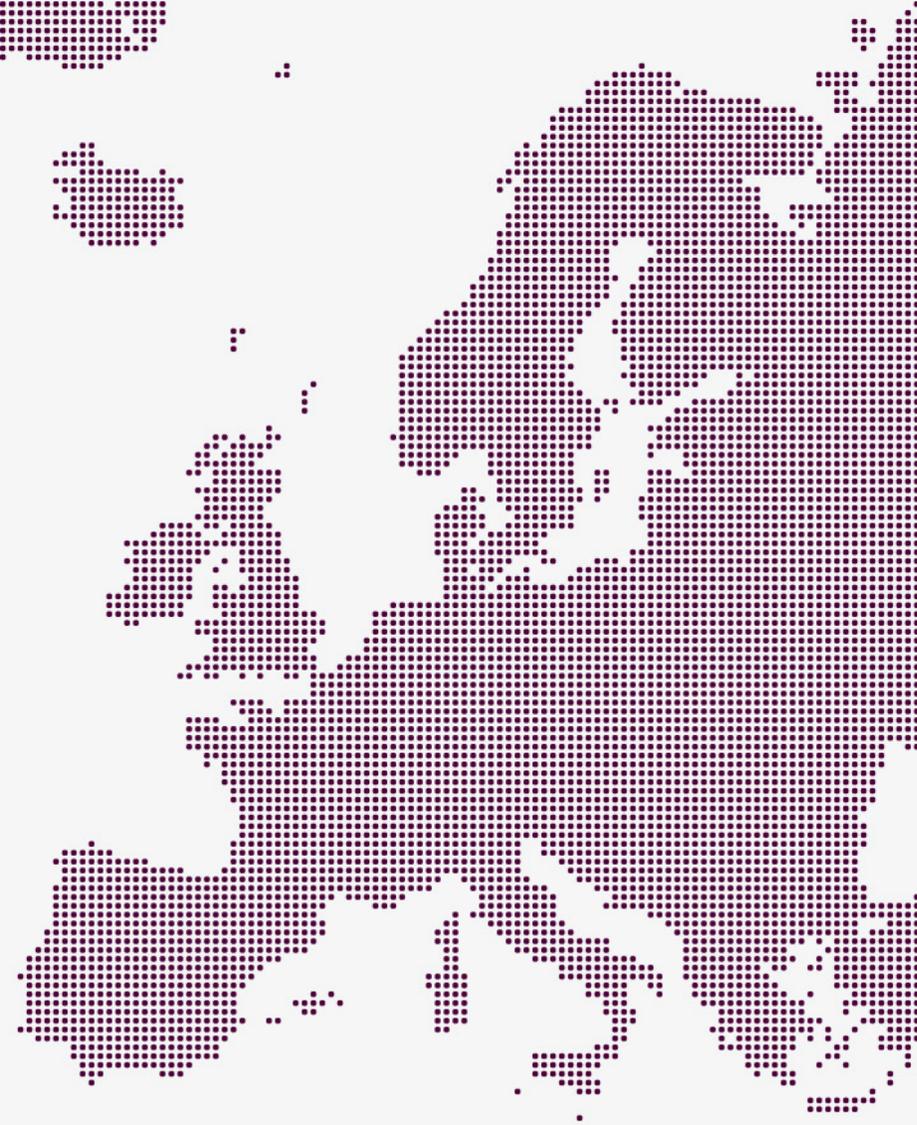
South America

Accessible travel and tourism has been a big focus in the region, driven by technology and partnerships between government and business.

Middle East & Africa

Research and outreach programmes aim to support disabled entrepreneurs in Africa, while developments in the Middle East aim to create truly accessible experiences.





Europe

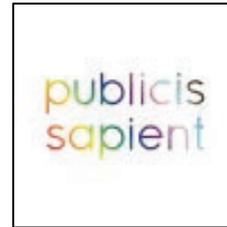


Hiring trends

- This quarter has seen an increase in the number of accessibility roles advertised across the region. Many of these roles were focused on user experience (UX), suggesting that businesses are looking to improve the experience for people with disabilities on their digital platforms.
- There has also been a noticeable increase in entry-level roles in accessibility departments, including specialist apprenticeships and internships. This indicates that companies are looking to invest for the future and build internal capabilities for accessible design.
- A number of organisations advertised roles for project managers, indicating the potential for plans to run large-scale diversity and inclusion projects in the future.



Sample of diversity, inclusion, accessibility and ESG roles posted on LinkedIn (March – May 2023)



UX Manager (Accessibility Specialist)

Publicis Sapient
(UK)



Digital Accessibility Specialist Apprentice

Atos
(UK)



Customer Accessibility & Inclusion Manager

National Express
(UK, Hybrid)



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Senior Manager

The Football Association
(UK)



Project Manager Internship (Office of Accessibility)

Salesforce
(Spain)



Internship Global Diversity & Inclusion

Hugo Boss
(Germany)

British Vogue publishes first Disability Issue.

The May issue, titled 'Reframing Fashion', focuses on disability justice, accessibility and pride. It features 5 disabled cover stars and 19 disabled people in total from fashion, sport, and the arts.

The magazine's cover stars include actress Selma Blair, who has multiple sclerosis, and model Ellie Goldstein, who has Down syndrome. The May issue also features Sinéad Burke, who runs accessibility consultancy **Tilting the Lens**, as a contributing editor and cover star.

Other contributors to the new edition include racing driver Nicolas Hamilton and comedian Rosie Jones, who both have cerebral palsy, and Justina Miles, who is Deaf and was the sign language interpreter at Rihanna's 2023 Super Bowl half-time show.

Disability should feel personal to us all. Some 16 million people in the UK are Disabled, with millions more Disabled-adjacent, whether visibly or invisibly. The time has come for us to get real about who we are as a society, and for fashion to build a better, more accessible and inclusive industry.

Edward Enninful, Editor-in-Chief,
British Vogue

British **Vogue** Editor-in-Chief, Edward Enninful has said working on the issue was one of the "proudest moments of my career". He revealed last year in his memoir that he has visual and hearing impairments and a blood disorder, which he said present "challenges" in his role but also meant he was able to relate to this issue's contributors.

Edward said a big part of shooting this Vogue campaign involved making those involved feel like there was a place in the fashion industry for them.

The commitment to inclusivity also went beyond representation, as British Vogue released a braille edition of the magazine for the first time in its 107-year history and the May issue has been made available in audio format to make it accessible to blind and visually impaired people.



Vanish Reckitt wins Channel 4 Diversity in Advertising Award.

The new Vanish ad, 'Me, My Autism and I' was created by Havas London with support from Ambitious about Autism.

The brief for this year's Diversity In Advertising Award, which offers advertisers and agencies the opportunity to win £1 million worth of commercial airtime on **Channel 4**, encouraged brands to tackle the ongoing lack of authentic portrayal and representation of visible or non-visible disabilities. New Channel 4 insight revealed that only 4% of TV adverts in the UK feature disabled people, compared to 22% of the UK population who are disabled.

Vanish's winning campaign shines a light on the gender gap in autism diagnoses to celebrate and support autistic girls. According to **Ambitious about Autism**, autistic girls are three times less likely to receive a diagnosis than boys, and diagnosis for a quarter of girls takes two years or longer.

New research from Vanish and Ambitious about Autism further reveals that 92% of autistic people are affected by sensory sensitivity, 73% use clothes to help regulate their senses, and 75% say keeping the look, smell and feel of clothes the same is important. Wearing familiar clothing directly affects the mood of 81% of autistic people, and an attachment to clothing was a factor that led over a third (34%) of autistic people to think they might be autistic.

The docudrama film shot by Oscar-winning director Tom Hooper follows a day in the life of 15-year-old autistic girl Ash, cast alongside her real family and best friends, and her elemental relationship with her favourite hoodie. Supporting the campaign through PR is model and author, Christine McGuinness, who unveils her own must-have clothing item – a grey hoodie.

Sources: [Channel 4](#), [Ambitious about Autism](#), [Ambitious about Autism and Vanish, 2023](#), [YouTube](#)

Launching during World Autism Acceptance Week, the wide-ranging campaign also included a £100k social content series produced by Channel 4's digital content team 4Studio, an exhibition on London's South Bank, a social campaign, an online hub telling other autistic girls' stories, a research and talent-backed PR activation, and direct financial support to Ambitious about Autism.



Greece is making more than 280 beaches wheelchair accessible.

One of Europe's most popular holiday destinations is becoming more inclusive for people with disabilities.

The Greek islands welcome more than 33 million tourists every year, and in a bid to encourage more disabled travellers to the country, Greece's Tourism Minister, Vassilis Kikilias has announced a new initiative to make a total of 287 beaches fully accessible to people with mobility disabilities.

220 of these beaches will be accessible by the summer of 2023, following a project (rumoured to have cost over US\$15 million) which involves installing the **SEATRAC** system.

SEATRAC founder Gerasimos Fessian lives by the sea in Greece, but has always had problems getting in and out of the water due to his disability. He began researching potential solutions with Ignatios Fotiou, CEO of **TOBEA (Thinking Out of the Box Engineering Applications)**. They discovered that barely any devices existed to provide seaside support, giving them the opportunity to fulfil unmet needs. The prototype for the system was created in 2009 and commercialised in 2012.

The SEATRAC system operates with a remote control, lowering users into the water with a chair along a moveable track. Once in the water, a handrail allows users to disembark the chair and swim in the water. The system can be installed on different types of terrain, from sand to rocky beaches.

In addition to the SEATRAC launch, the company has introduced an "accessibility chain" on any beaches using the system. This means disabled beachgoers will have access to parking, walkways, accessible changing rooms, toilets, and shaded areas.



“
All beaches around the world should be fully accessible so that everyone is free to enjoy the sea independently and safely.

Ignatios Fotiou, CEO,
TOBEA

Specsavers criticises new alt-text joke trend.

The eyecare brand has spoken out against Twitter's new joke picture trend as it misuses accessibility features.

On **Twitter**, people have been posting an image which simply reads "click here", on a white background, with an arrow to where the image ALT text can be accessed. However, instead of a description, there is a joke or a punchline to the tweet.

Alternative text, known as ALT text, is designed to provide visually impaired users with a description of the image, which can be used in collaboration with accessibility features like screen readers.

Specsavers criticised this trend, tweeting their own version of the meme. In the ALT text, Specsavers wrote:

"The image says 'click here' with an arrow pointing to the ALT description tag in the bottom left corner. Side note for everybody: Many Twitter users, including brands, have been using this to prompt people to open the ALT text, where they have left a joke.

ALT text is a hugely important accessibility tool designed to help people navigate the internet more easily, so it shouldn't be used as a punchline. This is especially true if the ALT text doesn't describe the image, leaving blind and visually impaired people out of the joke."

Responding to Specsavers, the **Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)** wrote "Exactly this. Thanks for reminding everyone", while other Twitter users praised the brand for highlighting the importance of alternative text for disabled people.

Sources: [Mirror](#), [Yahoo News](#), [Twitter](#)

Executive summary

Let's discuss

The global view

Regional perspectives

Conclusion

Specsavers

Image description

The image says "click here" with an arrow pointing to the ALT description tag in the bottom left corner.

Side note for everybody:

Many Twitter users, including brands, have been using this to prompt people to open the ALT text, where they have left a joke.

ALT text is a hugely important accessibility tool designed to help people navigate the internet more easily, so it shouldn't be used as a punchline. This is especially true if the ALT text doesn't describe the image, leaving blind and visually impaired people out of the joke.

Specsavers @Specsavers

Click here

ALT

11:40 AM · May 2, 2023 · 4.7M Views

2,729 Retweets 479 Quotes 13.6K Likes 143 Bookmarks

R N I B

RNIB @RNIB · May 2

Exactly this. Thanks for reminding everyone. #AltText #A11y

114

15.8K



Dante Licona @Dante_Licona · May 2

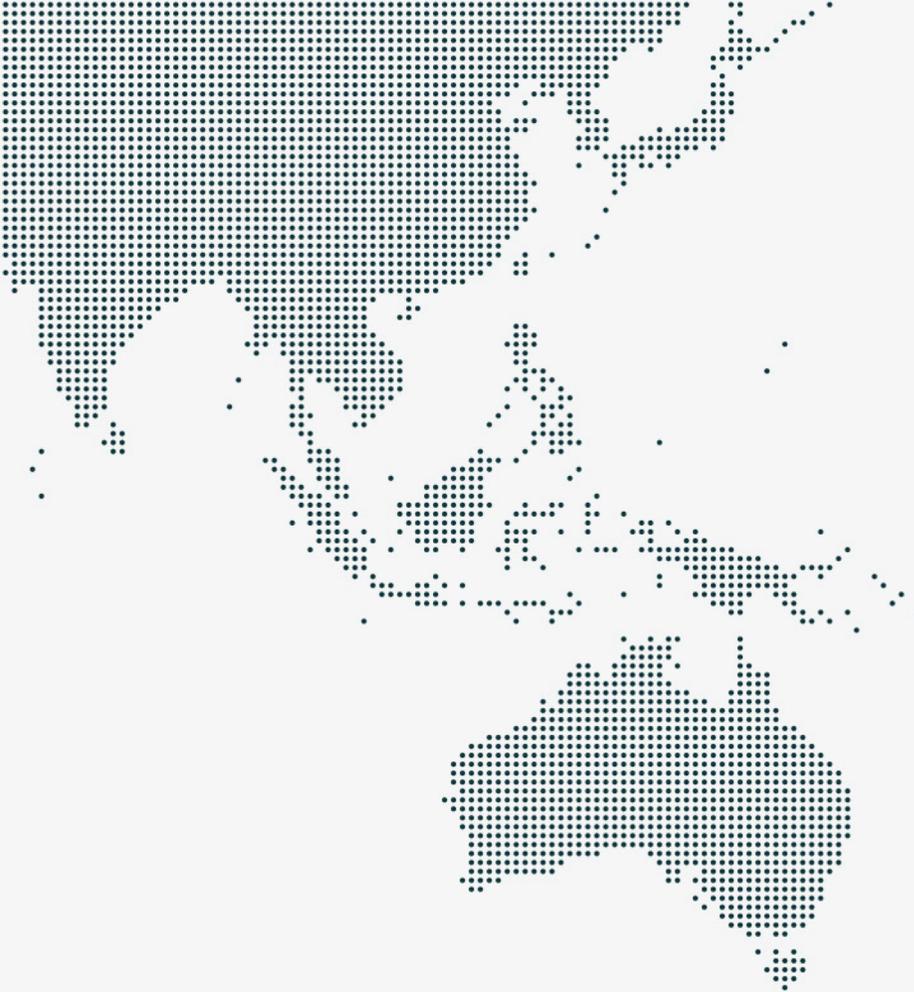
Good one 👍

Thanks for showing other brands how to really use the ALT text field, @Specsavers 🌟

1

88

56.7K



ASIA PACIFIC



Hiring trends

- Organisations across the region were advertising roles for senior diversity and inclusion advisors/consultants, indicating an increased focus on policy and compliance.
- The prevalence of accessibility roles decreased dramatically compared with last quarter, especially in India, where the number of accessibility roles advertised usually outweighs positions in diversity and inclusion departments.
- More roles were advertised as remote or hybrid, as opposed to onsite. This may reflect the regional trend noted in last quarter's Issue towards more flexible working arrangements, particularly in Japan.



Sample of diversity, inclusion, accessibility and ESG roles posted on LinkedIn (March – May 2023)



Inclusion Specialist – People and Inclusion
KPMG Australia
(Australia, Remote)



Policy Advisor – Inclusion, Diversity and Talent
Insurance Council of Australia
(Australia, Hybrid)



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
Specialized Group
(Japan)



Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Reinsurance Group of America
(Hong Kong)



India Gender Consultant
International Finance Corporation
(India)



Head – ESG
Michael Page
(India)

Zelda, the virtual assistant who speaks Auslan, in development.

The Auslan Communication Technology Pipeline is aiming to create a virtual assistant named Zelda that recognises and speaks Auslan (Australian sign language).

The visual interface will allow users to sign to it with a question or command and have the device understand and come back with a response.

The project is being driven by Jessica Korte, a technology design academic at the **University of Queensland**. Korte says the team began the project by interviewing D/deaf people "to make sure we're designing a technology they actually want to use in a way that they actually want to use it".

D/deaf participants in the research phase were able to add new features based on their experiences, such as doorbell notifications and alerts for certain sounds like car alarms and babies crying. Interviewees said that they currently rely on family or neighbours for this kind of information.

It's not the first time people have tried to develop technology to help better connect hearing and D/deaf people. But often those attempts have been driven by assumptions about what D/deaf people want, says Adele Greedy-Vogel, a research assistant on the project who is a hearing child of Deaf adults. She feels that a lot of technology in the space is designed so that hearing people can understand D/deaf people, but that the emphasis needs to change so that D/deaf people are given more access.

In terms of timing, the team expects to have a "minimum viable product" later this year. Something that's more user friendly is still several years away.

Sources: [ABC News](#)

But the team is confident that once the product is ready, there will be people ready and willing to use it. Julie Lyons, a Deaf research assistant on the project commented, "A lot of Deaf participants that we interviewed were really keen to buy this type of product and that's because they want to become more independent".



Jessica Korte leads the Auslan Communication Technology Pipeline.



Zelda makes the Auslan sign for "name".



It's very important for Deaf people to access Auslan because Auslan is our native language.

Julie Lyons,
Research Assistant

AI suitcase prototype developed for blind and visually impaired travellers.

Researchers in Japan have developed navigation suitcases using artificial intelligence (AI) to help visually impaired people get to their destinations safely.

Dr Chieko Asakawa, who is blind, is the Chief Executive Director of the **Japanese National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation**. She came up with the idea for the AI suitcase when her luggage hit a wall at an airport and she realised that suitcases could be used as a tool to detect obstacles.

Chieko then worked with several companies, as well as universities and other organisations, to make the prototype, which operates at a walking speed of an adult, and is equipped with cameras and sensors that detect obstacles or people nearby. The suitcase also includes voice guidance on the location and the user's surroundings, helping people with visual impairments to navigate more effectively.

A survey by the Japanese Ophthalmological Society shows that the total number of blind people in Japan has reached about 1.64 million and it's estimated that the market for assistive devices will reach US\$6 billion in Japan by 2025.

One of the next steps for the prototype will be getting it to work in crowded environments. In the future, the suitcase will also be equipped with facial recognition technology, to help users recognise acquaintances as they approach.

The ultimate goal is to make it possible for blind travellers using the AI suitcase to move around airports safely and efficiently.

Sources: [Sky News](#), [Yahoo Life](#)



I hope to use the AI suitcase to travel by myself so I can visit friends around the world.

Dr Chieko Asakawa, Chief Executive Director,
the Japanese National Museum of
Emerging Science and Innovation

Disabled representation on Australian screens still "critically low".

According to a new report, diversity in Australian television has improved but the industry still has more work to do when it comes to representation of disabled people.

Screen Australia's Seeing Ourselves report, released in April 2023, is a follow-up to a 2016 study looking at the diversity of main characters in more than 360 Australian TV shows.

The report shows there have been increases in the levels of diversity on screen since 2016, including more representation of First Nations people, which increased from 4.8% to 7.2%.

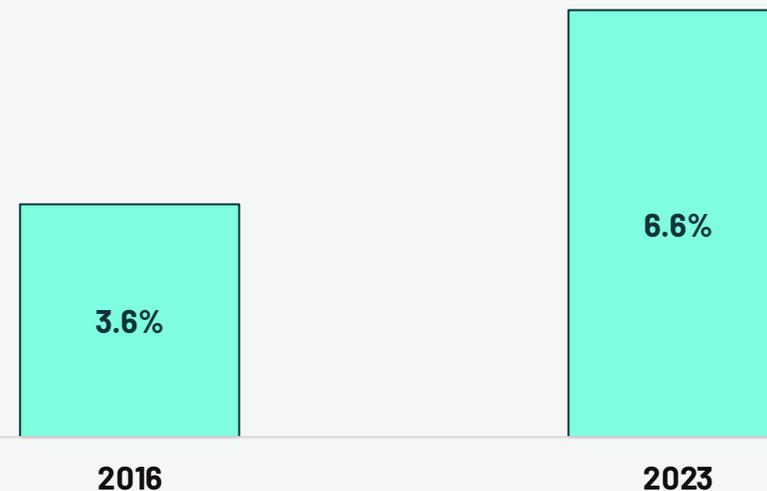
However, the report noted representation of disabled people remains "critically low" and overall representation of diverse communities on TV remains below the levels in the general population.

Disabled representation on screen rose from 3.6% to 6.6% overall, but remains well below levels in the Australian population, which stand at around 18% of people with some form of disability.

In 2016, just 10% of Australian programmes featured a disabled character, but that has improved to 29% in 2023.

Screen Australia's CEO Graeme Mason said the results in the report were encouraging, but the work to improve diversity on Australian screens was not yet finished.

Disabled representation on Australian TV



29%
of programmes
in 2023 feature a
disabled
character.



SBS show Latecomers centres on two characters with cerebral palsy.

Disability rights activists stage protests on Seoul subway network.

Protesters are demanding an increase in funding for mobility provisions and the installation of lifts at all stations to make the network accessible for wheelchair users.

Disabled people have been protesting on the subway network during the morning rush hour, blocking entry to trains and disrupting major lines. They say they are tired of being denied access to parts of the system.

Currently, only 19 out of 275 stations in the city (7%) are without lift access, according to **Seoul Metro**. But activists say it's not just about the numbers — they say the approach taken by authorities to the protests reveals the misconceptions surrounding disability in South Korea.

Seoul's mayor, Oh Se-hoon, has vowed "zero tolerance" towards the protests. In a Facebook post, he wrote, "I can no longer overlook the damage and inconvenience inflicted on ordinary citizens." However, disabled protesters say the language used by the mayor proves their point because they are not considered "ordinary citizens".

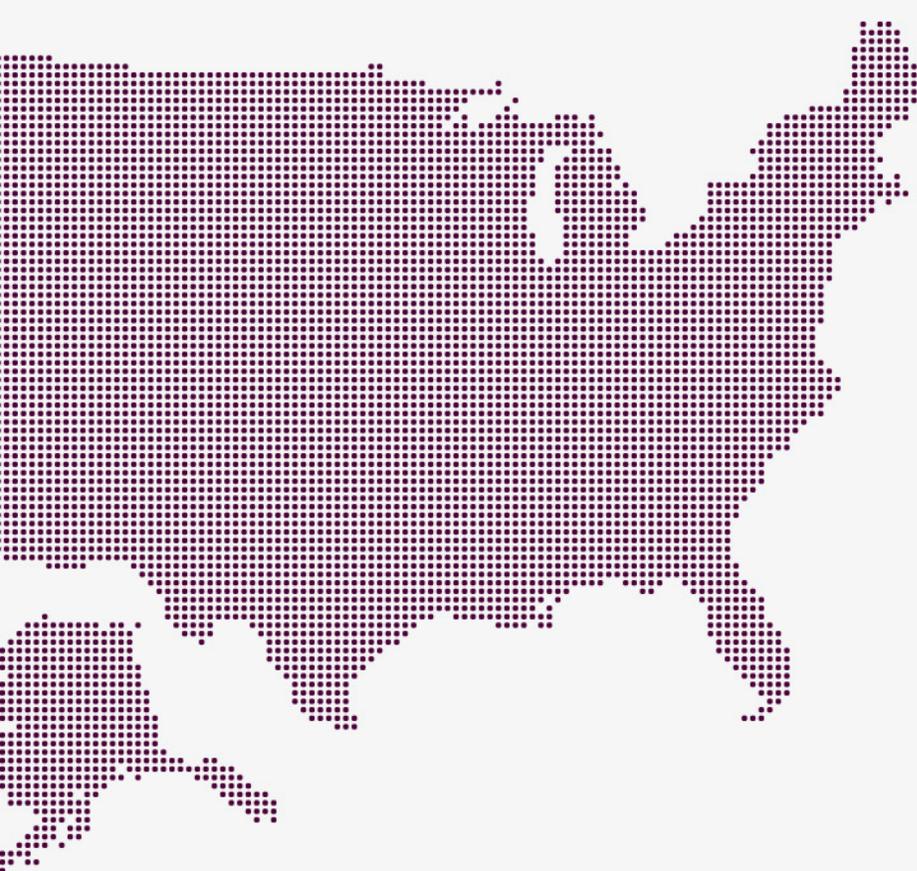
Others, such as wheelchair user Jimin Hong, feel the protests are necessary to force a conversation about disability. She said "In South Korean society right now, you don't see disabled people enough. Our life has always been stuck at home. We give up on going to places even if we really want to go. [But] we want to show the world that we exist."

In 2015 Jimin, and her mother Yunhui founded **Muui**, a social venture that has created over 1,000 interactive maps that show accessibility across Seoul.



I understand this is a frustrating situation for commuters. But we've been shouting like this for over 20 years and we still haven't got the same rights.

Park Kyoung-seok,
Disability rights activist



NORTH AMERICA



Hiring trends

- There was a marked decline in the number of diversity, inclusion and accessibility roles advertised across North America, which reflects the trend highlighted in last quarter's Issue that hiring has decreased across the region. This is expected to decrease further as we progress into 2023 and economic uncertainty persists.
- The majority of roles posted were in the health sector, indicating that for certain industries, investing in diversity and inclusion remains a focus.
- There was a lack of accessibility roles on offer across the region, with most employers focusing on ESG hiring.



Sample of diversity, inclusion, accessibility and ESG roles posted on LinkedIn (March – May 2023)



Diversity Program Director
Elevance Health
(Florida)



Director of DEI and Belonging
LifeLong Medical Care
(California)



Social Impact Specialist
Kia America
(California)



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Data Analyst
CommonSpirit Health
(Kentucky)



Senior Manager, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility
Diabetes Canada
(Toronto)



Manager, Environmental, Social and Governance – ESG
Randstad Canada
(Toronto)

Nike rebrands employee network.

The brand announced it would be rebranding its employee network to reclaim the word 'disability'.

In a **LinkedIn** post for Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) 2023, **Nike** shared its decision to change the name of its NikeUNITED employee network from the 'Ability Network' to the 'Disability Network'.

As one of eight NikeUNITED Employee Networks, the Disability Network seeks to empower a culture of belonging while championing universal inclusion and accessibility for the wellbeing and success of all.

The brand stated the aim of the rebrand was to reclaim the word 'disability' as a source of "strength, diversity and insight, and a core part of our culture of belonging and innovation".

Nike also published a short film featuring Nike employees and network members, sharing how the renaming is empowering them to "boldly share who they are". The film features audio description, captions and sign-language interpretation throughout to ensure it is fully accessible to people with disabilities.

When Nike launched the FlyEase trainer in 2021, it was criticised by some within the disabled community for not explicitly mentioning disability in its advertising and press, promoting the shoes instead as "sophisticated, accessible solutions".

This rebrand indicates that Nike has learned lessons from past experiences and actively listened to the views of disabled employees.



New report reveals barriers faced by Canadian travellers with disabilities.

The federal Auditor General's report found that more than one million people with disabilities encountered barriers on federally regulated planes and trains in 2019 and 2020.

The report, published in March 2023, states that about two-thirds of people with disabilities in Canada encountered barriers on federally regulated planes and trains in 2019 and 2020, highlighting a lack of consultation and enforcement by agencies involved.

Auditor General Karen Hogan says in the report that **Via Rail** and the **Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA)** have made accessibility improvements in recent years, but serious gaps still remain.

One of the issues considered in the report was a lack of fully accessible travel booking sites, causing major problems for travellers with disabilities. For example, one of the accessibility issues noted was that the wrong departure times showed on the Via Rail website for people using a screen reader.

1 million

people with disabilities in Canada encountered barriers on federally regulated planes and trains in 2019 and 2020.



The report found that transport companies missed opportunities to gain insights on the travel experiences of people with disabilities by not conducting a more thorough analysis of available complaint data.

It also found that almost a third of executives and managers at CATSA were late in completing mandatory accessibility training, and at Via Rail, 39% were late, while 17% didn't do it at all.

The Canadian Transportation Agency has promised to consult with, and shadow, travellers with a variety of disabilities on their journeys to get an idea of their experience and include that information in their renewed enforcement strategy.

Sony Electronics launches new retinal projection camera kit.

The new camera kit helps people with low vision capture the world around them.

Together, **Sony** and **QD Laser** are offering technology with focus-free retinal projection, giving people with low vision a new way to view and photograph the world. The camera kit consists of Sony's DSC-HX99 compact camera and QD Laser's Retissa Neoviewer, a viewfinder that uses laser retinal projection technology to project a digital image directly onto a photographer's retina.

It fires a low-power, full-colour laser beam through the centre of the user's pupil and projects a crystal-clear image directly onto the retina, meaning that the retina essentially becomes the screen. This sidesteps common issues many people have with the parts of the eye needed to focus images.

Retissa, the maker of the Neoviewer, designs technology for the 250 million people worldwide with visual impairments, working with ophthalmologists, orthoptists, opticians and schools for the blind to design products to improve quality of life.

Sony hopes to make photography more accessible for a wider range of photographers and creators. To that end, the technology company is bearing a portion of the costs of the product and offering the new kit for only US\$600. Sony also plans to collaborate with Japanese and American schools for the blind.

The camera kit will be available to purchase in the US in limited quantities through Sony's website, starting early summer 2023.

Sources: [Sony Electronics](#), [Imaging Resource](#)



We continue to leverage creativity and technology to enhance the accessibility of our products, services and experiences. The Retina Projection Camera kit is a step in our commitment to a future that empowers all types of creators.

Yang Cheng, Vice President, Imaging Solutions,
Sony Electronics Inc.

Netflix updates Disability Collection and accessibility features.

'Celebrating Disability with Dimension' is a global collection of series and films with characters or stories about people living with disabilities.

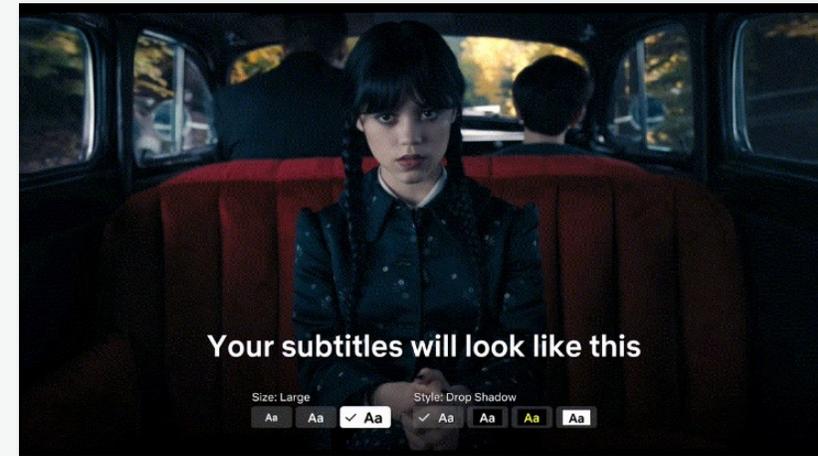
As part of its continuing work to improve accessibility and representation, in May 2023, **Netflix** updated its disability collection to include newly added films 'I Used to Be Famous' and 'True Spirit', alongside favourites like 'Love on the Spectrum' and 'Extraordinary Attorney Woo'.

The streaming giant also announced that over the last year it has focused on increasing the total number of films and series that support Audio Descriptions (AD) and Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH), and on expanding the languages availability in AD and SDH, so that more members can enjoy great stories from around the world.

Leveraging member feedback to improve the viewing experience for one member living with a disability makes it better for all of us.

Heather Dowdy, Director of Product Accessibility,
Netflix

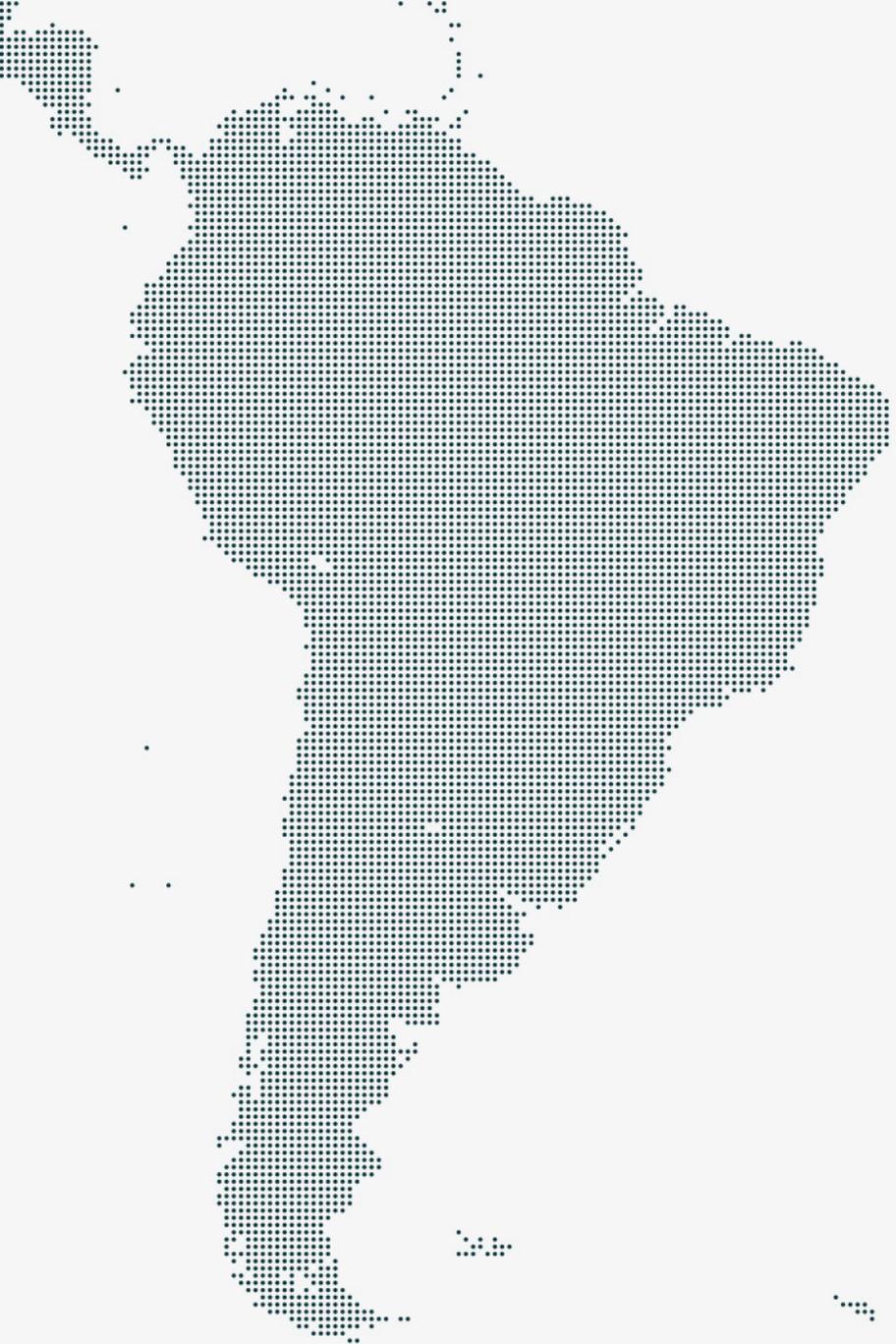
In March, Netflix introduced the ability to customise subtitles shown on TV that were previously only modifiable on the web, giving members more choice and control over selecting the size and style of the subtitles to suit their needs.



Netflix viewers can customise subtitles on TV, choosing from various colours, sizes and effects.

In a statement on its website, Netflix also paid tribute to disability rights activist Judy Heumann, who passed away earlier in 2023. In 2020, Judy featured in the Academy Award nominated documentary Crip Camp released by the streaming service. The company dedicated their work to improve accessibility to Judy, saying: "On Global Accessibility Awareness Day, we remember Judy's legacy and continue our work to make entertainment for everyone."



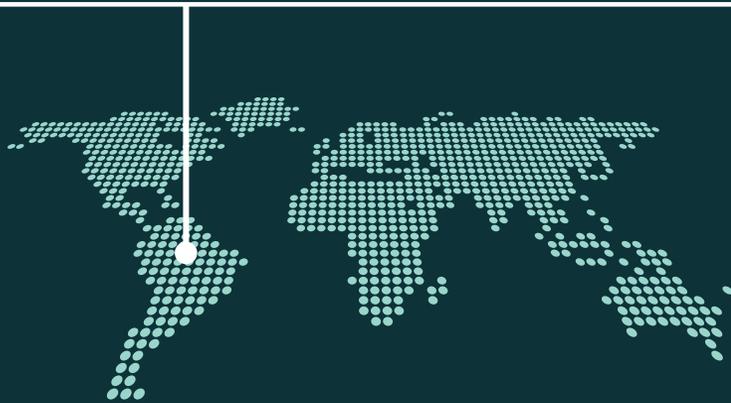


SOUTH AMERICA



Hiring trends

- There was an increase in the number of diversity and inclusion jobs advertised across the region compared with the previous quarter of study, with a wide spread across the region.
- The majority of roles advertised were for website accessibility specialists and programme managers, suggesting an increased focus from organisations in the region on compliance with web accessibility guidelines.
- The roles were advertised by a strong mix of local companies and global brands with a presence in South America.
- There was also a rise in the number of roles advertised as hybrid or remote compared with last quarter. This suggests a move towards more flexible working practices.



Sample of diversity, inclusion, accessibility and ESG roles posted on LinkedIn (March – May 2023)



Website Accessibility Specialist
Rad Hires
(Chile, Remote)



Diversity and Inclusion Positions
Diageo
(Colombia)



D&I Program Manager
F5
(Mexico, Hybrid)



Accessibility Program Manager (Web Accessibility)
HP
(Mexico, Hybrid)



Head of Social Inclusion
Pacifica Continental
(Argentina)



Regional DEI Leader
Gensler
(Costa Rica)

Wheel the World partners with Expedia Group.

The accessible travel company, which started in Chile, is joining forces with Expedia Group as its exclusive partner.

Travellers who use a wheelchair can now seamlessly book **Expedia Group's** global supply of hotels complemented by **Wheel the World's** detailed accessibility data.

Wheel the World customers will soon have access to Expedia Group's hotel inventory, with the ability to filter properties by their accessibility needs and preferences through application programming interface (API) technology.

The partnership will also give Expedia customers an added layer of accessibility data, including but not limited to bed height, room width and specific shower characteristics.

Wheel the World provides travel to destinations globally in North America, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. They first launched Expedia Group's Rapid API in the US and are gradually expanding to other markets globally.

Inclusivity is a priority for travellers, according to the 2022 Inclusive Travel Insights Report by **Expedia Group Media Solutions**, which found that 92% of consumers believe it's important for travel providers to meet the accessibility needs of all travellers.

Respondents also indicated they would spend more on travel that's inclusive, with 70% of consumers saying they would choose a travel option that was more inclusive to all types of travellers, even if it's more expensive.

Sources: [PhocusWire](#), [Expedia](#)

92% of consumers believe it's important for travel providers to meet the accessibility needs of all travellers.

70% of consumers say they would choose a travel option that was more inclusive to all types of travellers, even if it's more expensive.



At Wheel the World, our purpose is to make travel accessible for people with disabilities, and we know that we need to collaborate with other companies to make it happen.

Alvaro Silberstein, CEO & Co-Founder,
Wheel the World

Piuta Beach becomes the twelfth accessible beach in Costa Rica.

The beach in Limón, Costa Rica, has become accessible thanks to a new campaign to make the Caribbean a more inclusive destination.

The **Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT)** and the **Costa Rican Network of Accessible Tourism** inaugurated Piuta Beach as part of the DONATAPA campaign, which aims to make the Caribbean an “innovative, sustainable, and inclusive destination for all tourists to enjoy”.

The project aligns with the country’s National Tourism Plan 2022 - 2027, based upon inclusion, innovation, and sustainability, positioning Costa Rica as an accessible destination, according to the Minister of Tourism, William Rodríguez.

The beach now has a 30-metre retractable walkway and an amphibious chair that allow people with disabilities to enter the water safely.

Demonstrating how inclusivity can go hand-in-hand with sustainability, both the walkway and the chair were constructed from 1,200 kilos of plastic caps donated by private companies, as well as government institutions.

This initiative is an important reactivator for Limón, an Afro-Caribbean community with a significant population in which Piuta beach is the centre of community life.

It is hoped that the accessibility provisions will encourage more tourists to the area who may not otherwise have been able to visit.



This project is aligned with the National Tourism Plan 2022 - 2027 whose axes of inclusion, innovation and sustainability seek to integrate all people into the Costa Rican tourism system on an equal footing.

William Rodríguez,
Minister of Tourism

The Unemployment Fund Administrator in Chile partners with app to improve access.

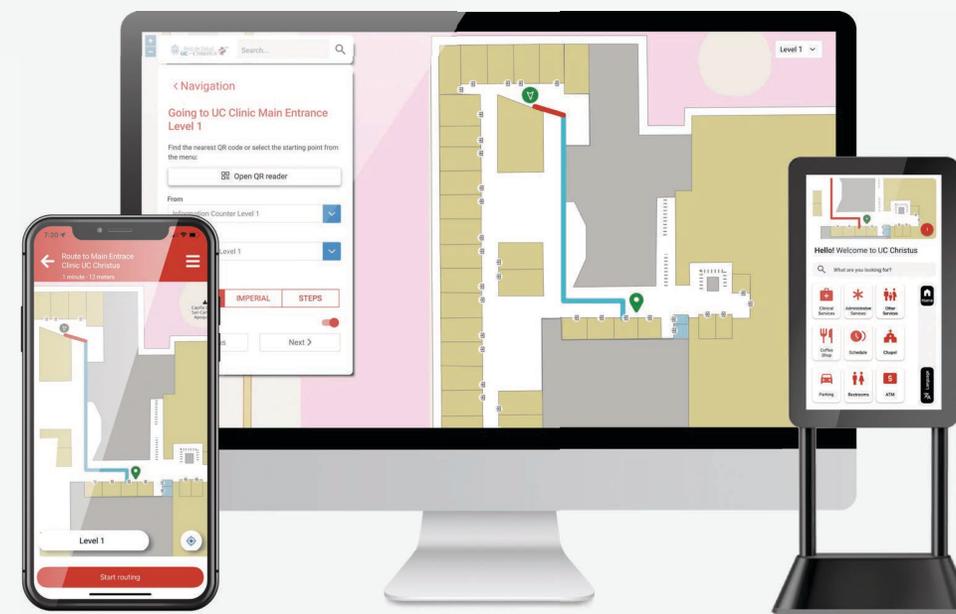
The Unemployment Fund Administrator (AFC Chile) announced its incorporation into the Lazarillo app, with the aim of improving and facilitating access to its services for people with visual impairments.

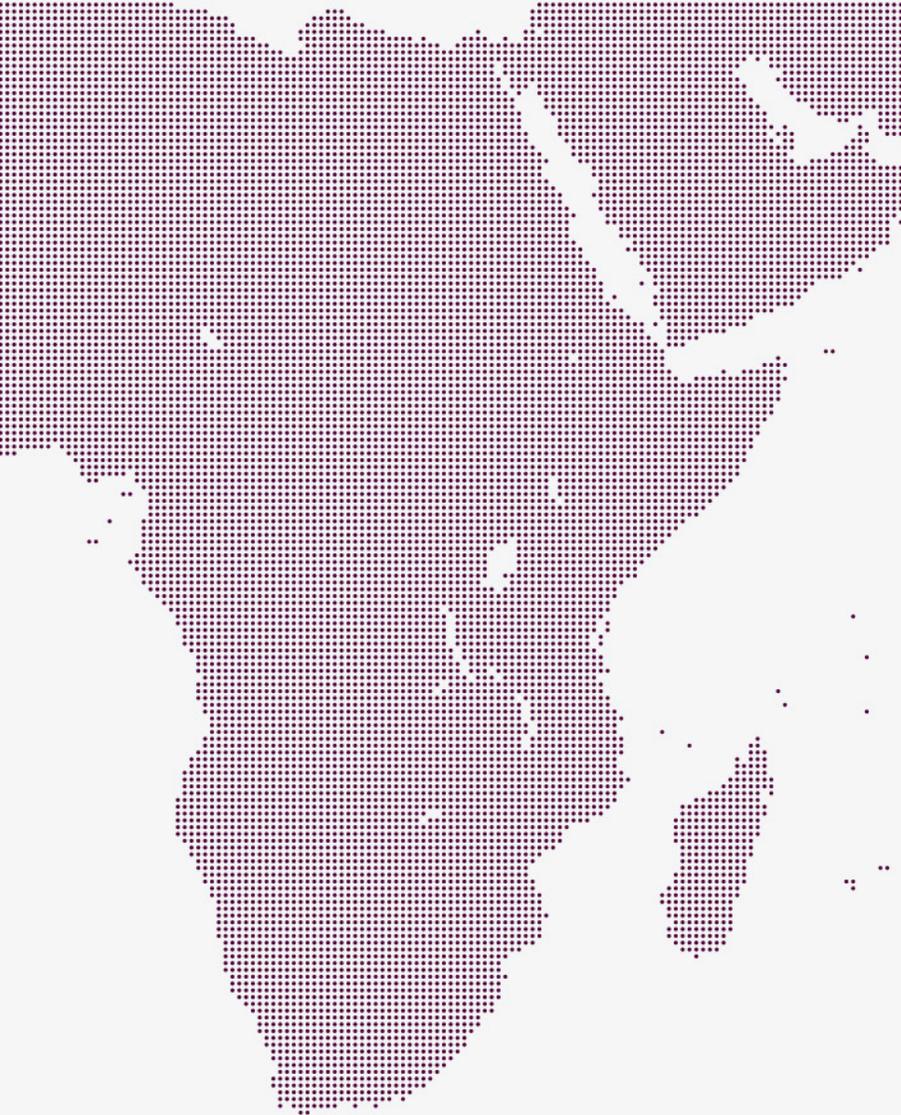
With more than 30,000 users in Chile, **Lazarillo** is a free mobile application that offers accessibility support for people with visual impairments. The inclusive way-finding solution offers turn-by-turn audio guidance, allowing users to move around spaces independently and access services via customisable digital maps.

AFC users will now have an accessibility guide to its 52 branches and 16 partial-service offices throughout Chile, facilitating greater access for people with visual impairments.

Lazarillo works with businesses and public organisations all over the world to create an enhanced experience for customers, adding layers of accessible and interactive digital information to physical spaces. The app currently partners with museums, banks, hospitals, schools and public transport systems.

The company states that its development team works in close collaboration with people with disabilities to continually improve the platform, ensuring the needs of the disabled community are prioritised in the company's development of new assistive technology solutions.





MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA



Hiring trends

- There continued to be a decline in the number of diversity and inclusion jobs advertised across the region this quarter, with many of those available concentrated in the education and charity sectors.
- Among the roles on offer, the highest demand was for specialists and advisors on ESG and diversity and inclusion.
- Israel continues to be a hub for accessibility-related positions, with a number of internships and opportunities for students being advertised this quarter.



Sample of diversity, inclusion, accessibility and ESG roles posted on LinkedIn (March – May 2023)



Corporate Head of Inclusion
GEMS Education
(Dubai)



**Web Accessibility Analyst
(Student Position)**
accessiBe
(Israel)



**Director, Diversity, Equity
and Inclusion (DEI)**
Clinton Health Access
Initiative, Inc.
(Nigeria)



**Diversity and Inclusion
Specialist**
Dimension Data
(South Africa, Hybrid)



**Talent Development and
Inclusion Specialist**
Otis Elevator Co.
(Turkey)



ESG Consultant
AECOM
(Dubai)

Red Sea Global pledges to revolutionise accessible tourism.

The multi-project developer has committed to becoming entirely disability-friendly.

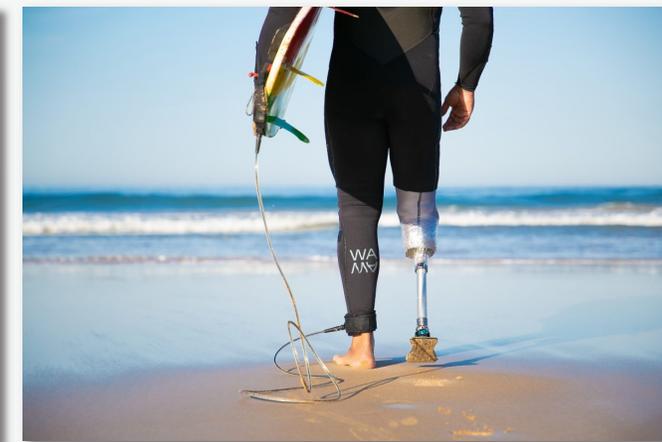
The **European Network for Accessible Tourism** estimates that the global economy loses US\$150 billion each year by not acknowledging the spending power and sheer scale of accessible tourism.

Many have promised action in the world of accessible travel, without delivering on their commitments, but **Red Sea Global (RSG)** has set itself some very ambitious targets. It will require all its employees, consultants and partners to follow the UN-backed standard, **ISO 21902 - Accessible Tourism for All**, throughout their work.

The standard means every contractor at RSG's destinations must ensure guest experiences take a universally inclusive approach. This commitment includes using new technologies to enhance luxury tourism experiences for people with disabilities and their families, who have historically been underserved by the global industry.

It is totally inexcusable for our industry to exclude so many people.

John Pagano, CEO,
Red Sea Global



The developer will add ramps and accessible rooms at all its hotels and offer adaptive experiences. Guests with a disability who take part in activities will be provided with adaptive equipment and partnered with specially trained instructors and through RSG's diving subsidiary, **Galaxea**, PADI-certified adaptive support divers will be trained to assist divers with disabilities.

Red Sea Global will also operate seaplanes, making bespoke provisions for guests with disabilities, to mitigate boarding challenges. Before arrival, there will be trained handlers at the Red Sea International Airport to enable the safe transportation of wheelchairs and specialist equipment.

Finally, to ensure the active participation of people with disabilities in the future of the tourism industry, RSG will continue to work with its hospitality and leisure partners to invest in opportunities for staff and potential talent with disabilities.

New study explores challenges young Kenyan entrepreneurs with disabilities face online.

The study recommends that designers of digital products and services involve people with disabilities at the beginning of the design process and include more robust accessibility testing to reduce the barriers identified by participants.

Conducted by **inABLE** and **Technoprise**, in partnership with **Caribou Digital** and the **Mastercard Foundation**, the study focused on the experiences of young people with disabilities in Kenya earning a living via digital platforms.

In Kenya, millions of people use digital platforms as part of everyday life. According to the 2021 FinAccess Report, over 81% of adults indicated that they use digital devices (especially for mobile money transactions) with 16% of adults making and receiving payments for goods and services using mobile money, and 13% using e-commerce platforms.

Kenya launched the **Standard on Accessibility for ICT Products and Services for Persons with Disabilities** in 2022, which provides guidance for producers and service providers to make their digital products and services accessible to all.

The study found that the most popular digital platform used by young people with disabilities for conducting business is **WhatsApp** (91%). Generally, participants reported that WhatsApp met the needs of simplicity, accessibility, and familiarity, and for participants with visual impairments, it can be easily accessed using a screen reader and/or talkback feature.

Sources: [All Africa](#), [Kenya National Bureau of Statistics](#), [Statista](#), [Kenya Bureau of Standards](#)

However, the report found that many e-commerce platforms still present significant challenges for sellers with disabilities, which are accentuated by the inherent barriers they face, such as reduced access to education and capital.

The top challenges cited by respondents were a lack of the ICT skills and knowledge needed to use digital platforms (86%), and the cost of assistive technology (80%). Participants described how devices with built-in accessibility features can be expensive. For instance, iPhones are more accessible than Android devices, but also more costly.

↓ The Experience	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Lack of ICT skills and knowledge is the main barrier for digital platform work.	86%	4%	10%
The cost of assistive devices is the main barrier for digital platform work.	80%	5%	15%
Negative attitudes toward people with disabilities are the main barrier.	64%	10%	26%
Digital platform creators involve people with disabilities.	36%	26%	39%
The county government recognizes and supports people with disabilities.	35%	21%	44%

However, the findings suggest that there is potential for online platforms to eliminate many of the physical barriers that young Kenyans with disabilities face to running their businesses, and the study makes a series of recommendations as to how service providers can improve their offerings.

Standard Chartered launches second Youth to Work programme for young people across Africa.

The flagship employability programme is part of the bank's global 'Futuremakers' initiative to tackle inequality and promote greater economic inclusion for young people.

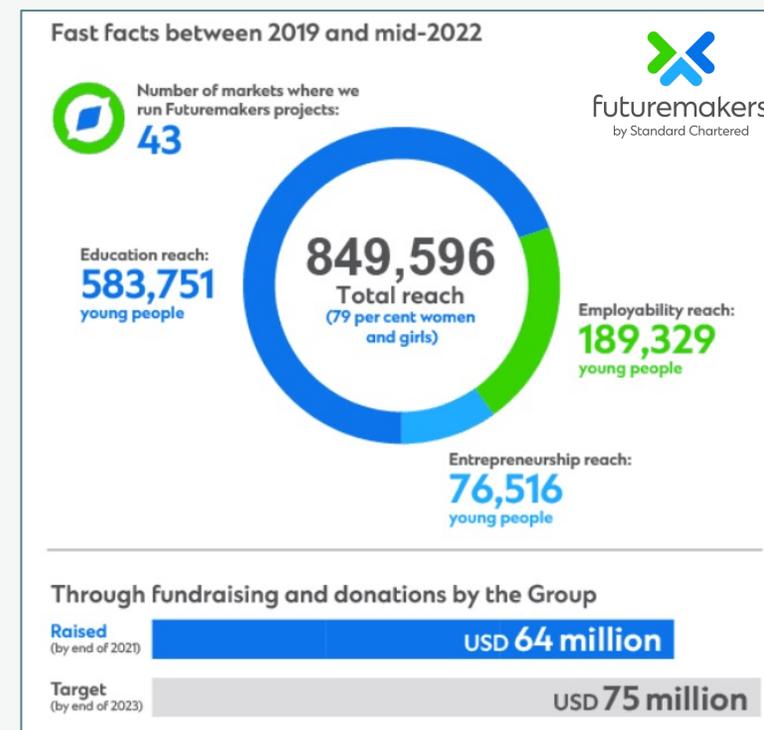
The 'Futuremakers' initiative, led by the **Standard Chartered Foundation (SCF)**, aims to support young people by providing them with skills and experiences to transition into employment or entrepreneurship. It focuses on three pillars: Entrepreneurship, Employability and Education.

The Youth to Work programme is delivered by teams in Uganda, Zambia and Ghana and is designed to support "exceptional young professionals" and small businesses to drive positive change for young people in local communities.

Disability focus

Standard Chartered states that in 2023, the initiative aims to continue to support employability across its markets and specifically promote economic inclusion for young people with disabilities.

To this end, the Youth to Work programme has extended the eligibility criteria for young people with disabilities in 2023, allowing anyone with a disability between the ages of 21 and 35 to apply.



Through our Youth to Work programme, we create opportunities for young people to become job-ready.

Asiedua Addae, Head Corporate Affairs, Brand & Marketing,
Standard Chartered Bank Ghana

New instrument developed for people with Cerebral Palsy.

A development team in Israel has created an accessibility-focused instrument with a web platform that enables easy pick-up-and-play functionality.

Boaz Rienshriber was working as a music teacher when he was approached by a prospective student whose cerebral palsy severely inhibited her ability to play or even hold a guitar. After failing to find an appropriate instrument for her, Boaz decided to put together a development team to construct an instrument perfectly tailored to her physical abilities: the Arcana Strum.

The instrument's design is based on the controls of a motorised wheelchair. In its simplest form, the instrument is intended to be placed on a table or the musician's lap, and is played via a combination of large, colour-coded buttons and a lever used to strum.

We want to give an opportunity to tens of millions of children worldwide to not be systematically excluded from music education.

Haim Kairy, CEO/CTO & Co-Founder,
Arcana



The instrument's chord panel can be rotated up to 180 degrees, allowing for countless ways to hold the instrument, which can be hugely helpful for musicians who feel more comfortable using their heads, toes or elbows than their fingers.

Just as important as the instrument itself is the online learning platform that **Arcana Instruments** has designed to teach students how to play it. The portal automatically detects the instrument's connection to a computer, turning it into a simple plug-and-play system. The website features a long list of chord charts for popular songs, which simply illustrate which buttons to push and when.

Last month, Arcana won first place in Innovation at the **GES Awards**, the world's largest international Education Technology competition.



CONCLUSION



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 01 Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) 2023.**

Businesses should use global awareness days to announce tangible commitments to inclusion, rather than paying lip service.
- 02 Representation 'firsts'.**

Companies across all sectors should continually look for new and impactful ways to improve disability representation.
- 03 AI-enabled inclusion.**

Developers should be aware of the new and emerging ways that artificial intelligence can be used to empower people with disabilities.
- 04 Accessible tourism goes global.**

Businesses in the travel and tourism industries should continue to prioritise the inclusion of people with disabilities around the world.
- 05 Inclusive technology enables new experiences.**

Technology companies should continue to identify opportunities for innovation that can bring new experiences to disabled consumers.
- 06 Big brands challenge perceptions of disability.**

Brands have an opportunity and a responsibility to raise awareness and challenge stereotypes about disability.
- 07 New research reveals insights on disabled workers.**

Businesses are in a powerful position to fund research which can improve the lives of disabled people in the workplace and beyond.
- 08 Social media drives conversations about accessibility.**

Brands should make use of digital platforms to advocate for the disabled community and participate in critical conversations.
- 09 Business leaders speak up about their disabilities.**

Leaders at major organisations should promote inclusive leadership by using their platform to share their own experience of disability.
- 10 Representation on TV remains a focus.**

Companies producing on-screen content should continue to prioritise representation and regularly subject themselves to scrutiny.

DISABILITY
IS OUR
BUSINESS.



 Valuable
500