essential ACCESSIBILITY® ⊕ LEVEL access

2022 STATE OF
Digital Accessibility

In collaboration with:

G3ict | IAAP International Association of Accessibility Professionals

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Level-up Your Digital Accessibility Program

More organizations are taking a deliberate approach to adopting and maturing their digital accessibility programs. However, our 2022 State of Digital Accessibility survey reveals there's significant opportunity for improvement. The following report details key insights and learnings that will help you benchmark the current state of your accessibility program, and better understand where, and how, investments in accessibility impact users. At a high level, we've captured four recommendations you can incorporate today to level-up your digital accessibility program:

✔ **Research new automated testing tools, especially those that can be used as part of continuous integration.**

✔ **Include people with disabilities in your user testing.**

✔ **Invest in training opportunities, such as those offered by organizations like eSSENTIAL Accessibility + Level Access, G3ict, and IAAP.**

✔ **Bring your marketing department and other content creators on board to create a fully accessible digital experience.**

For more information about making your digital properties accessible to people with disabilities, please visit levelaccess.com/resources or essentialaccessibility.com/resources.

Introduction

Welcome to the State of Digital Accessibility report, presented by Level Access, eSSENTIAL Accessibility, The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict), and the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP). The 2022 report draws on the data gathered in the State of Digital Accessibility survey to provide insights into overall trends in the industry and the digital accessibility programs of organizations large and small.

The 2022 report will cover the following themes:

Benchmarking data

The 1,030 participants in the survey represent nearly every industry group and organization size. The report provides a set of tools to benchmark an accessibility program and understand where, and how, investments in digital accessibility can have a significant impact on an organization and for people with disabilities.

Drivers, goals, and challenges

Every accessibility program has a story—a spark to get things started, goals to achieve, and obstacles along the way. The report tells these stories through data so organizations with a maturing accessibility program will find they are in good company.

Program maturity markers

The 2020 State of Digital Accessibility Report was the first to start tracking program maturity by asking participants to identify markers of a mature accessibility program and noting whether their organization had achieved those goals. This year's survey delves deeper into the maturity question and tracks the progress of each maturity marker.

Product development, design, and testing

The majority of people who took the 2022 survey identified themselves as responsible for the design, development, and testing of websites, apps, and other digital assets. Insights about tools, training, user testing by people with disabilities, and more will be presented.

Content creation

Digital accessibility is not limited to code. All content published digitally should be accessible to people with disabilities, including blog posts, documents, emails, webinars, videos, and social media. The report delves into all types of electronic content and the processes by which they are created, tested, and published.

Customer service and accessibility feedback

Accessibility is an ongoing effort. As content changes, new errors may be introduced, and it's important to provide a way for users to submit feedback. It's also important to document the way in which organizations are resolving that feedback. In this year's survey, we ask about this process.

About the Survey Participants

Principal industries represented

There are more than 35 different industries represented in the 2022 survey data.

The top five industries include:

15.9%
Education Services

9.1%
Software Manufacturers

7.8%
Accessibility Consulting and Services

7.6%
State and Local Government
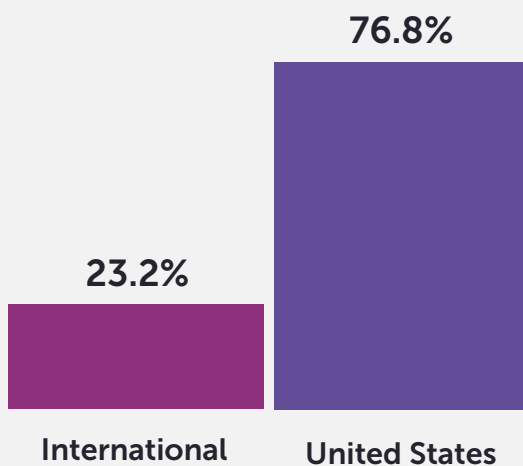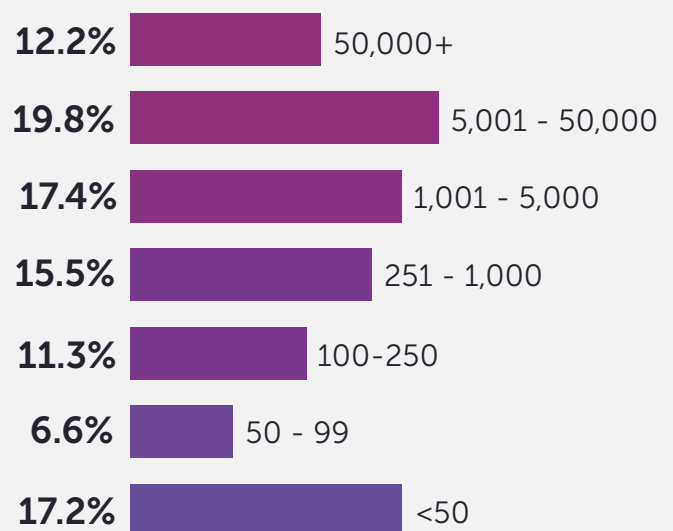
6.4%
Web Design and Marketing

Location

Similar to the 2021 survey, roughly three out of four participants work for organizations headquartered in the United States.

76.8%
23.2%

International   United States

Organization size (by employees)

12.2% 50,000+
19.8% 5,001 - 50,000
17.4% 1,001 - 5,000
15.5% 251 - 1,000
11.3% 100-250
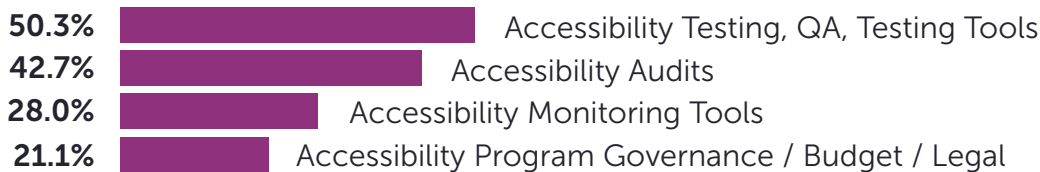**6.6%** 50 - 99
17.2% <50

Job duties of survey participants

Participants were asked to select up to five duties that were either part of their job or part of the jobs of people they manage. Their selections were used to customize the remaining questions in the survey.

Most represented job duties

1 Accessibility Testing, Quality Assurance (QA), Testing Tools–**50.3%**
2 Accessibility Audits–**42.7%**
3 UX / Design–**37.8%**
4 Content Creation–**29.1%**
5 Development / Engineering / Product–**28.1%**

Job duties within Accessibility

50.3% Accessibility Testing, QA, Testing Tools
42.7% Accessibility Audits
28.0% Accessibility Monitoring Tools
21.1% Accessibility Program Governance / Budget / Legal

Job duties within Website and Product Development

37.8% UX / Design
28.1% Development / Engineering / Product
14.7% Mobile Testing

Job duties within Marketing and Content Creation

29.1% Content Creation (web, marketing, e-learning, e-commerce)
22.6% Document / PDF Creation
11.2% Video / Webinars / Live-streaming Video
10.1% Social Media

Other job duties
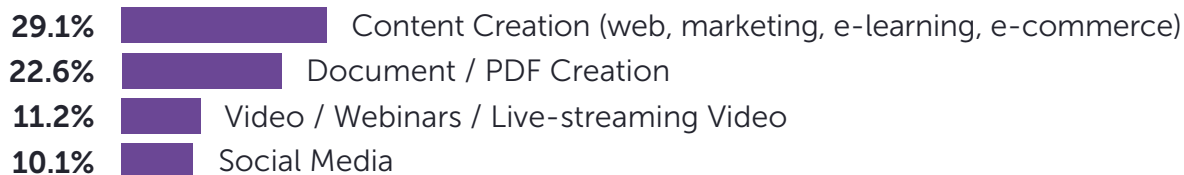
22.7% Customer Service / Accessibility Feedback
10.5% Procurement of Software / Hardware
8.5% HR / Diversity and Inclusion
8.4% Selling your organization's products / services
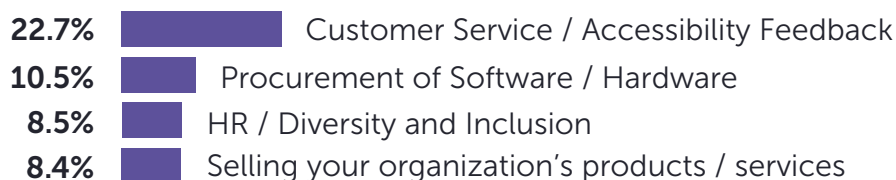
The State of Accessibility Programs

The 2022 survey found that the majority of accessibility programs are relatively young and have distributed responsibility and budgets. This was the case across all organization sizes and verticals.

The majority of accessibility programs are less than seven years old.

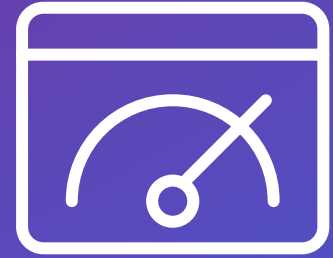This was similar to findings in the 2021 survey. Aligned with that, this indicates that most programs—and accessibility initiatives as a whole—are still relatively new.

How long has your organization been actively working toward accessibility compliance?

12.9% 0-1 years

27.3% 2-3 years

22.6% 4-6 years

16.4% 7-10 years

10.9% 11-20 years

7.9% >20 years

1.9% Not actively working toward accessibility compliance
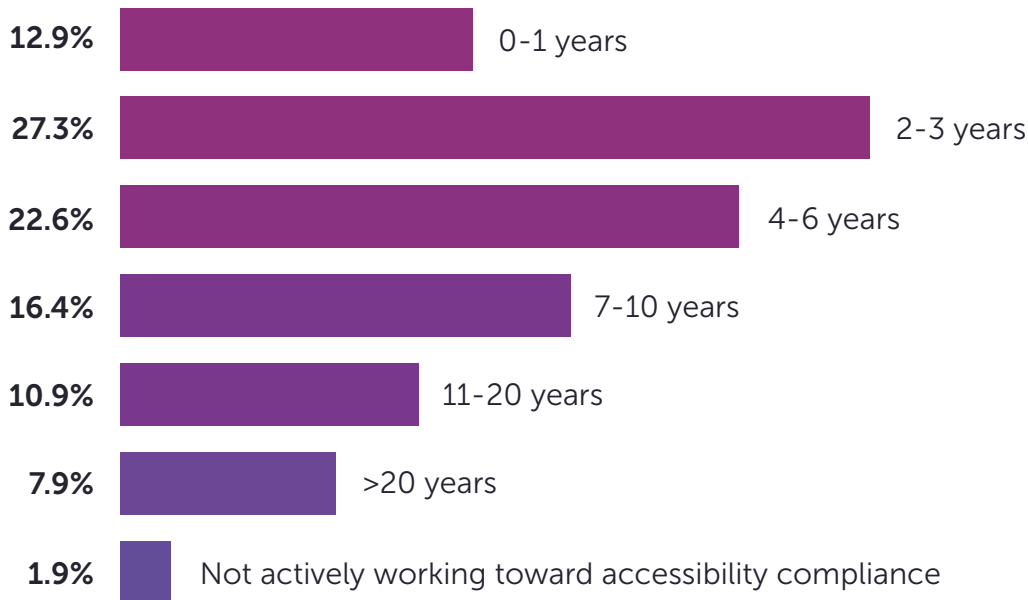
Overall maturity rating scale

Throughout this report, we track the overall average rating for each area. Participants were asked to rank their maturity on a metered scale of zero to three, with zero representing "Non-existent," and three representing "Proactive."
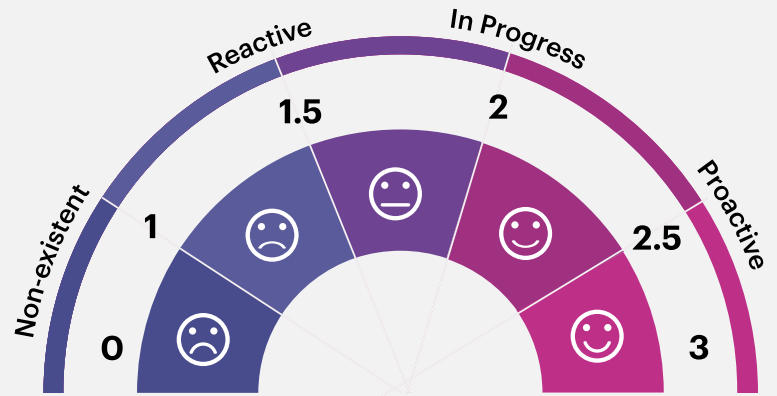
Overall accessibility program maturity rating for policy and commitment to accessibility

With regard to a commitment to accessibility, approximately **40%** of 2022 survey participants rated their organization's written policy and commitment to accessibility as "Proactive," the highest rating possible. Nearly **41%** gave themselves a rating of "In Progress."

☺ Weighted Average Maturity Rating—2.14 out of 3.0—"In Progress"

Governance of accessibility is often distributed among several departments.

36.6% of accessibility programs have distributed responsibility, which is down from **53.6%** in 2021. **44.1%** of programs roll up to one department or leader, up from **30.8%** in 2021.

Is accountability / governance for accessibility centralized?

44.1% Yes, it rolls up to one department / person.

36.6% No, it is distributed among several departments.

14.0% No, it varies based on the project.

5.4% Nobody is responsible.
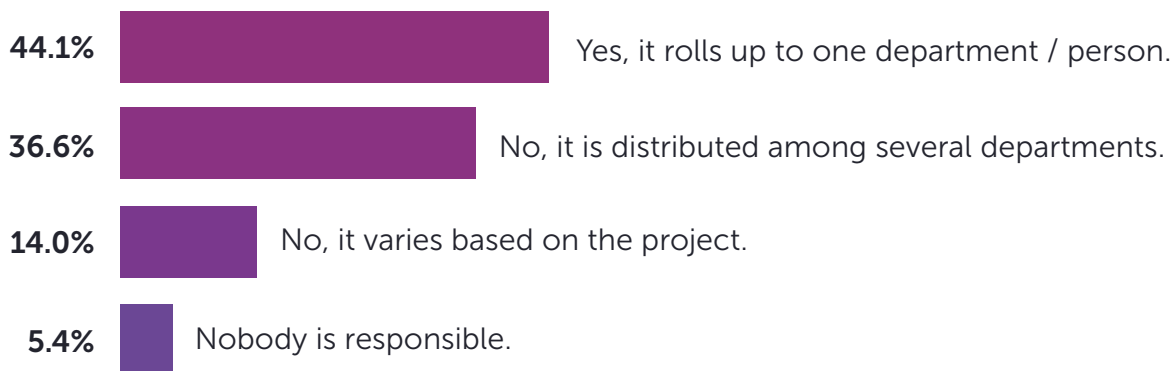
Where does accessibility live?

While it's usually clear which departments other types of compliance belong to, accessibility has found a home in a variety of departments, from Information Technology (IT) to User Experience (UX) to Customer Experience (CX) to Human Resources (HR).

Financial services

"Consumer Technology"

"UX"

"Communications"

Retail

"UX"

"Research and Development"

"Governance and visibility rolls up to the design system platform team, accountability is owned by feature teams"

Technology

"The Accessibility team"

"Application teams are responsible for their software"

"Both the Product General Manager (Sales and Development) and Cross-organization Center of Competency"

Public sector

"Community Relations"

"Office of Accessibility"

"Information Technology"

"Executive Director"

"The accessibility SME is in IT Services, but all employees are responsible for creating accessible content"

Business services

"Technology"

"We have an entire business unit devoted to accessibility"

Overall accessibility program maturity rating for funding

Accessibility programs are better funded in 2022. More than one-third of survey participants (**34.5%**) ranked their organization's accessibility program funding as "Proactive" (**27.5%** in 2021), and **38.6%** ranked theirs as "In Progress" (**34.2%** in 2021). Participants who reported accessibility funding as "Non-existent" dropped from **13.0%** in 2021 to only **7.6%** in 2022.
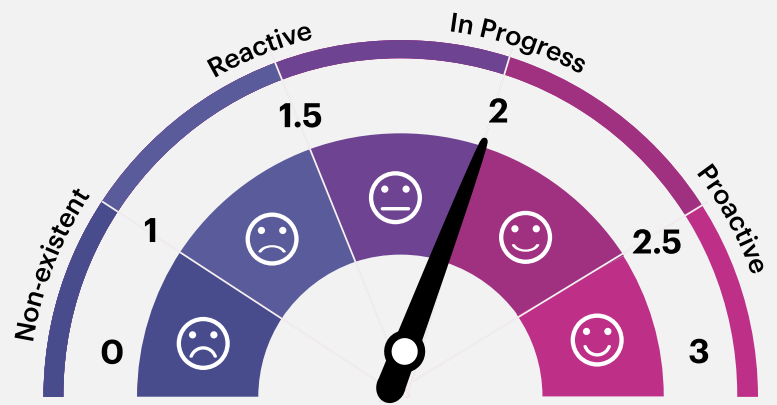
☺ Weighted Average Maturity Rating—2.0 out of 3.0—"In Progress"

Accessibility budgets are often distributed.

27.2% reported having a centralized budget for accessibility, which is up from **21.4%** in 2021. The majority reported their budget is distributed among the departments responsible for accessibility governance or varies by project.

Management of accessibility program budgets

Centralized—**27.2%**

Distributed—**60.1%**

There is no budget for accessibility—**12.7%**
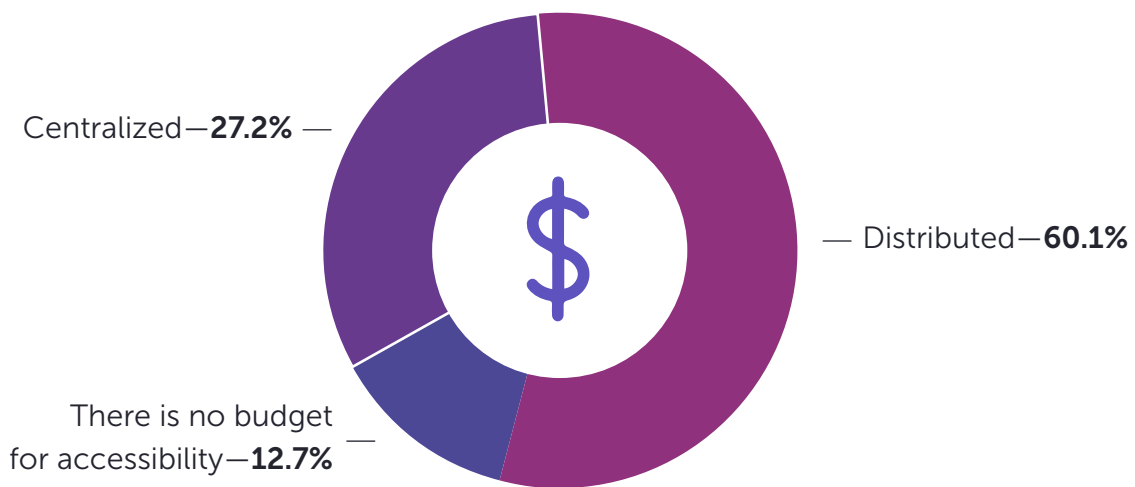
Business and Personal Drivers for Accessibility

Survey participants shared the reasons why their organization is committed to digital accessibility. The business drivers for accessibility continue to be a mix of better accommodating the needs of people with disabilities and legal risk reduction. Inclusion and providing a positive user experience top the list again in 2022, followed by complying with anti-discrimination laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Choose the top three reasons why your organization is addressing accessibility.

Responses	Answer choices
72.0%	Including people with disabilities
66.5%	Providing the best UX for all users
57.9%	Complying with laws
30.3%	Complying with client request
28.5%	Avoiding lawsuits (or OCR complaints)
24.8%	Protecting our brand image
10.2%	Protecting our market share
9.8%	Complying with a legal settlement

Personal motivations for accessibility

The survey also asked about personal motivations for addressing accessibility, since these often differ from business drivers. In 2022, individuals are far more concerned with inclusivity (**84.0%**) and user experience (**78.7%**) than their organizations.

What motivates you personally to address accessibility?

Responses	Answer choices
84.0%	Including people with disabilities
78.7%	Providing the best UX for all users
28.7%	Complying with laws
18.8%	Protecting our brand image
12.9%	Complying with client / supervisor request
9.2%	Avoiding lawsuits (or OCR complaints)
8.2%	Protecting our market share
4.1%	Complying with legal settlement
0.7%	None of the above
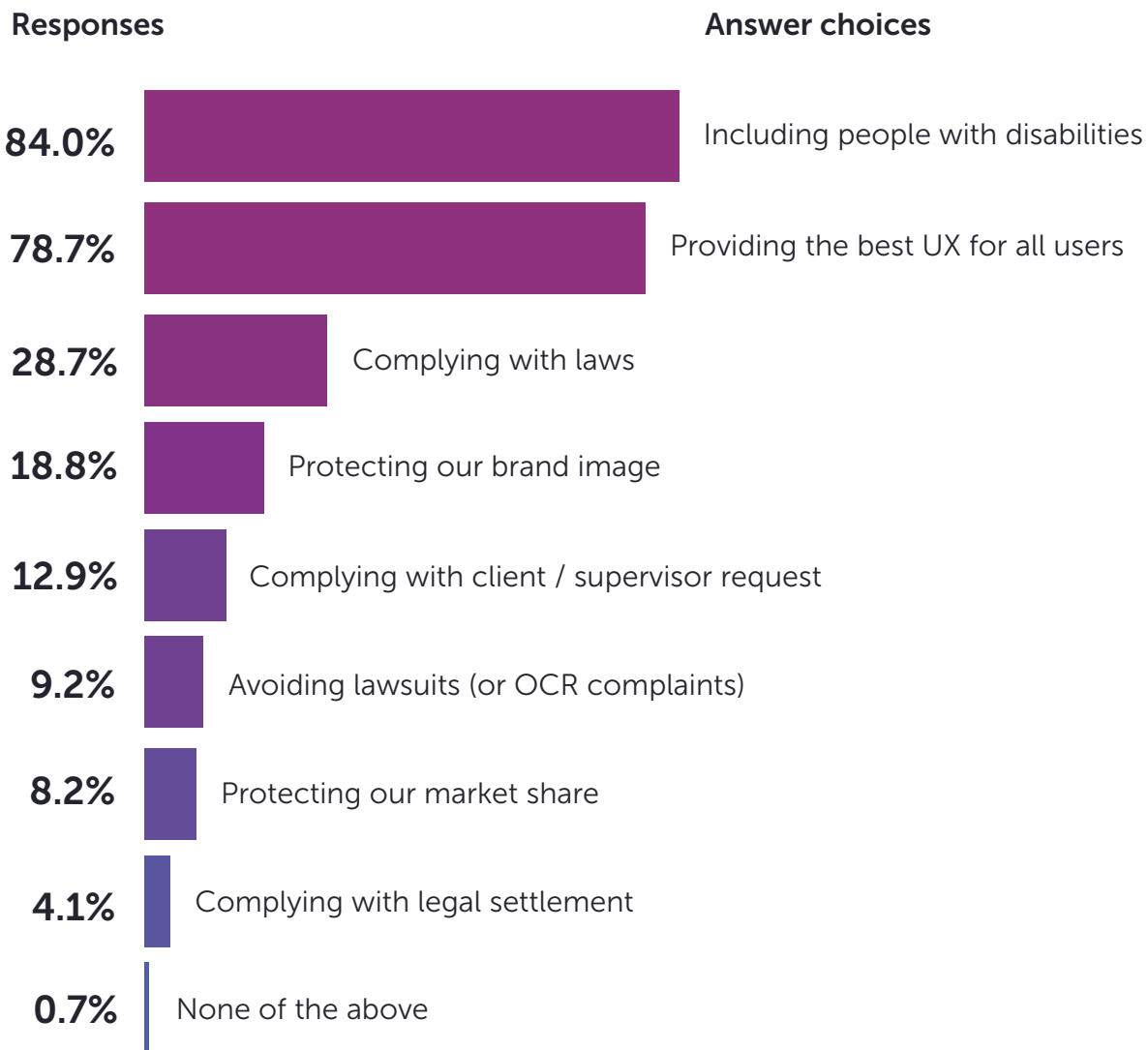
Goals for Accessibility Programs in 2022

Improved usability tops the list of program goals for 2022.

The top organizational goals for 2022 also include improving conformance to accessibility standards and guidelines, implementing an organization-wide approach to accessibility, maturing an accessibility program, and expanding accessibility initiatives to include mobile apps.

What are your organization's accessibility goals for 2022? (Select all that apply)

1 Improving usability for people with disabilities—**73.4%**

2 Improving conformance to accessibility standards / guidelines—**73.0%**

3 Implementing a standard, organization-wide approach to accessibility—**62.7%**

4 Maturing an accessibility program—**45.3%**

5 Expanding our accessibility initiative to include our mobile app—**26.8%**

6. Preventing, reducing or eliminating lawsuits filed against our organization

7. Making virtual work environments accessible

8. Maintaining the current level of accessibility

9. Addressing accessibility issues brought to light by COVID-19

10. Launching an accessibility program

Improving usability for people with disabilities

Since inclusivity was a top driver for accessibility programs, it makes sense to see improving usability at the top of the list of 2022 goals, with **73.4%** of respondents selecting it, up from **65.0%** in 2021.

This was the number-one goal for most industries, organization sizes, and accessibility programs of all ages, both in the United States and worldwide. The numbers suggest that more organizations are moving beyond the goal of compliance with standards to prioritizing better user experience, making sites more equitable for all users.

Improving conformance to accessibility standards / guidelines

Improving conformance to accessibility standards was a goal for **73%** of survey participants. This goal was particularly prevalent in:

- State and Local Governments, Education, and Financial Services
- Organizations with 1,001-5,000 employees
- Organizations with accessibility programs that are seven- to 10-years-old

Implementing a standard, organization-wide approach to accessibility

More than half (**62.7%**) of participants listed implementing an organization-wide approach to accessibility as an organizational goal for 2022, a significant jump from **51.9%** in 2021.

This was the number-one goal for organizations with 50-99 employees.

For organizations with 50,000+ employees and those with accessibility programs older than 10 years old, this dropped to the number-four spot. Larger organizations and those with older programs were more focused on maturing their approach versus implementing one.

Maturing an accessibility program

Overall, **45.3%** of survey participants list maturing their accessibility program as a top goal for 2022. But this goal was even more of a priority for larger organizations and those with older accessibility programs:

- Organizations with 50,000 or more employees—**61.1%**

- Accessibility programs that are 11-20 years old—**53.5%**

Maturity for one organization may mean investing in better monitoring and testing tools and adhering to a schedule of regular audits. For another organization, it may mean engaging more with the disability community and hiring usability testers with various disabilities.

Expanding our accessibility initiative to include our mobile apps

Expansion of accessibility to mobile apps rounded out the top five goals for 2022 with **26.8%** of organizations selecting it.
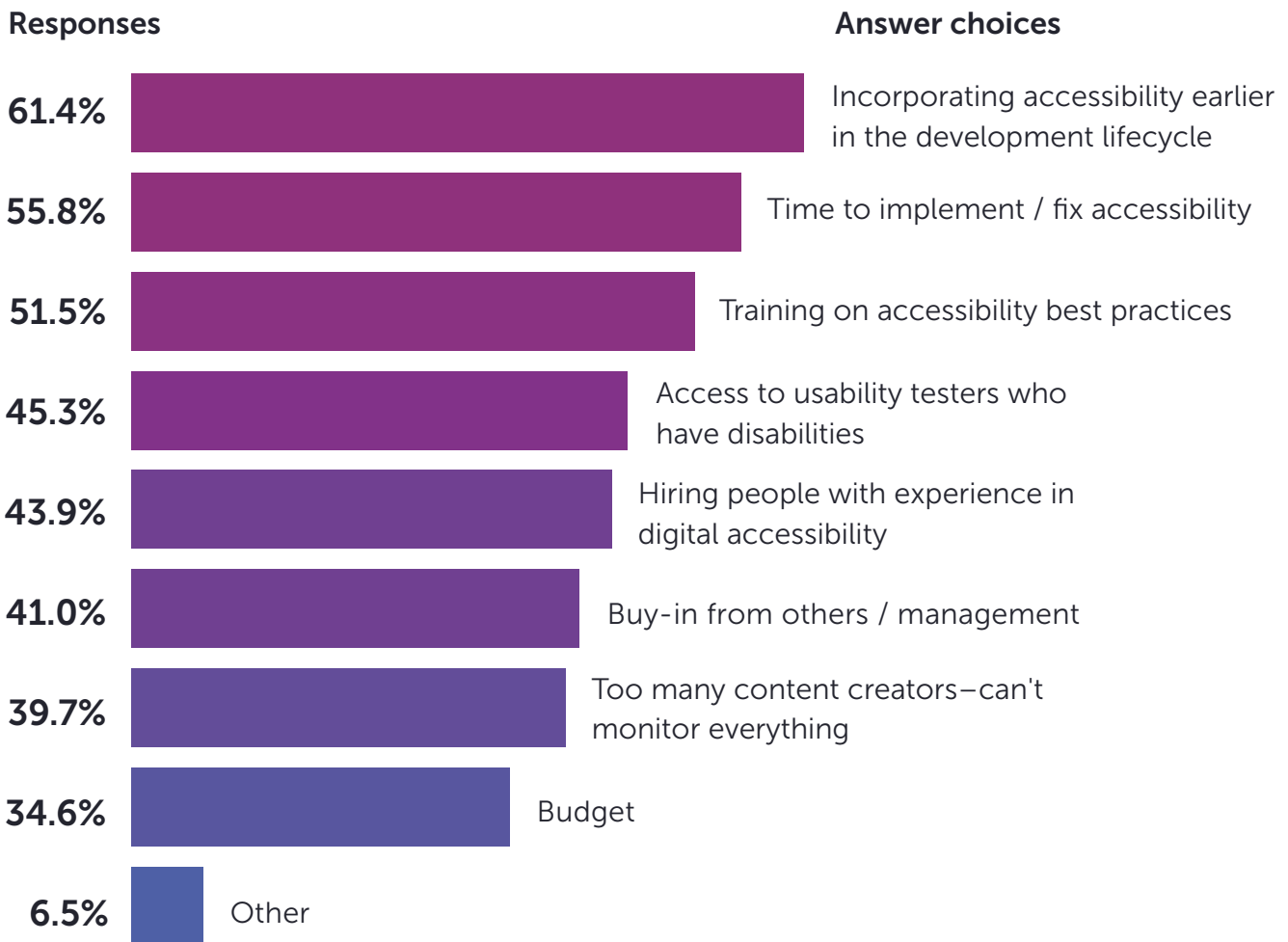
Of the organizations that included this as a goal, **74.8%** are currently testing their mobile apps. Mobile testing methods include automated tools (**49.5%**), manual inspection (**58.7%**), and testing by people with disabilities (**33.5%**). In addition, **71.0%** said they test their mobile apps with assistive technology or system accessibility settings like high contrast mode.

Challenges for Accessibility Programs

A thriving accessibility program does not appear fully formed and perfected; every program has its challenges. Survey participants were asked to identify the challenges faced by their accessibility programs, and five common threads were found.
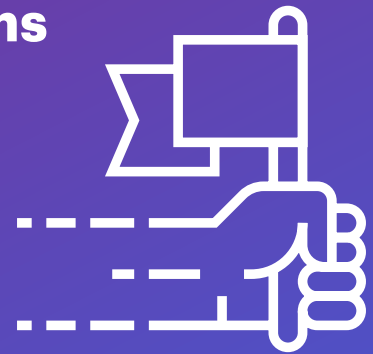
Thinking about your job function specifically, what challenges does your accessibility program face? (Select all that apply)

Responses

Answer choices

Response	Answer choice
61.4%	Incorporating accessibility earlier in the development lifecycle
55.8%	Time to implement / fix accessibility
51.5%	Training on accessibility best practices
45.3%	Access to usability testers who have disabilities
43.9%	Hiring people with experience in digital accessibility
41.0%	Buy-in from others / management
39.7%	Too many content creators—can't monitor everything
34.6%	Budget
6.5%	Other

1 **Incorporating accessibility earlier in the development lifecycle—61.4%**

This challenge rose to the top spot from number three in 2021, when it was at **53.2%**. When digital accessibility is only considered after a product is developed, remediation takes more time and energy. It is much more cost-effective to be thinking about inclusive design at the first stages of planning a new product or a new feature for an existing product.

For those involved in the creation of digital properties—including Product, UX, Engineering, and others—this challenge ranked high. Overall, incorporating accessibility earlier in the development lifecycle was the number-one challenge for:

Roles:

- Digital Accessibility Specialist
- Design / UX
- Development / Engineering and Product

Industries:

- Banking
- Education
- Government

2 **Time to implement / fix accessibility—55.7%**

Time to develop an accessible product—or remediate an inaccessible one—is a common challenge. It ranked as the number-five challenge in 2019, the number-three challenge in 2020, and climbed to the number-one challenge in 2021, before dropping to the number-two spot in 2022.

In many cases, it's due to competing demands, such as new features and security, especially when accessibility considerations weren't included in initial design and development.

3 **Training—51.4%**

Every role listed training among their top three challenges. With competing priorities, it can be hard to make time for professional development. However, training drops to the seventh-highest challenge from programs with IAAP-certified employees. This is likely because those organizations recognize the importance of training and have training programs in place, not because it is no longer viewed as a requirement.

4 **Access to usability testers who have disabilities—45.3%**

Access to testers with disabilities has held the number-four position for the past three years. While almost all organizations (**96.5%**) agree that testing by people with disabilities is important, **41.5%** are not currently doing it.

5 **Hiring people with experience in digital accessibility—44.0%**

This challenge is new to the top five in 2022, moving up from the number-eight spot in 2021. There is high demand for people that "get" digital accessibility and have experience in the field. This demand is clearly increasing over time.

Accessibility Program Maturity

The 2022 survey asked where organizations are on their path to taking their accessibility programs from good to great.

## Maturing an accessibility program was a top goal for organizations in 2022.

Organizations across all sizes, verticals, and ages of accessibility programs selected "Maturing an accessibility program" in their top five goals in 2020 (**44%**), 2021 (**42.6%**), and 2022 (**45.3%**).

Those organizations most likely to choose program maturity as a 2022 goal:

- Have 5,000 to 50,000 employees
- Report four- to six-year-old accessibility programs
- Operate in Education, Technology, and Financial Services
- Employ IAAP-certified personnel
- Work with an accessibility vendor

Program maturity markers

In the 2022 survey, participants were asked to select up to five areas of job focus. Each section had a maturity rating question at the end that pertained to that particular area. Once again, participants were asked to rank their maturity based on a scale of zero ("Non-existent") to three ("Proactive").
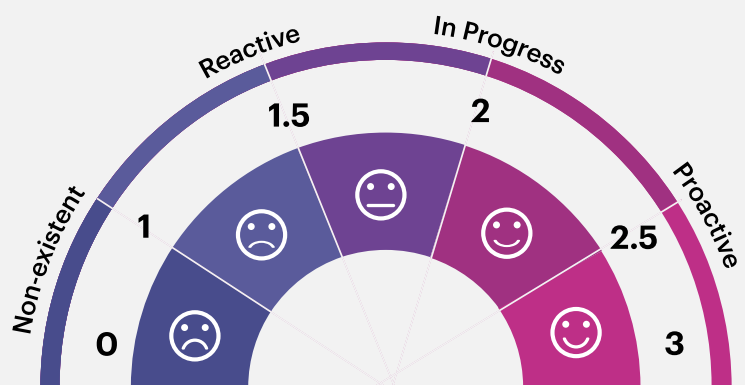
Monitoring and testing tools

☺ Weighted Average Maturity Rating—
2.0 out of 3.0—"In Progress"

Most accessibility testers rated their access to accessibility testing tools as "In Progress."

48.5%

28.9%

15.9%

4.9%

Non-existent | Reactive | **In Progress** | Proactive
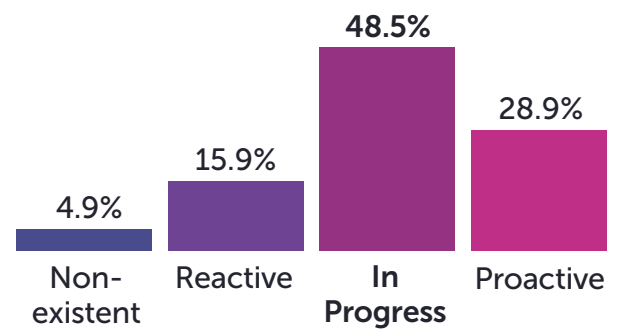
Fast facts:

94.4% of organizations use free tools, with the most frequent being browser extensions.

62.6% reported using paid accessibility testing tools, a significant jump from **51.2%** in 2021.

30.3% said their organization uses overlays for accessibility, but less than **4.0%** of those use them as their main approach.

73.3% reported using tools to monitor accessibility on their live systems, almost double the **33%** reported in 2021.

More on accessibility testing and monitoring tools on pages 30-33.

Written policy and commitment

☺ Weighted Average Maturity Rating—
2.1 out of 3.0—"In Progress"

Survey respondents rated their organization's written policy / commitment, with **40.9%** rating their policy as "In Progress."

40.9% | 39.8%

8.3% | 9.4%

Non-existent | Reactive | **In Progress** | Proactive
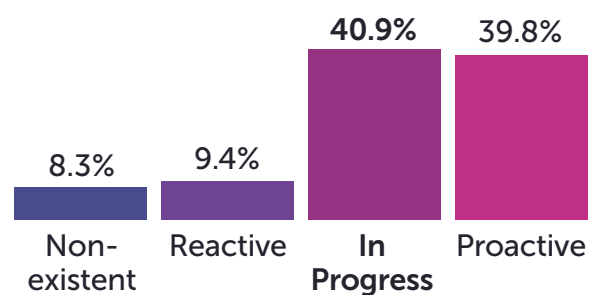
Process to resolve, document, and audit accessibility complaints

☺ **Weighted Average Maturity Rating— 1.9 out of 3.0—"Reactive"**

Survey respondents rated their organization's process to resolve, document, and audit accessibility complaints.

5.0% — Non-existent
24.0% — **Reactive**
38.0% — In Progress
26.3% — Proactive
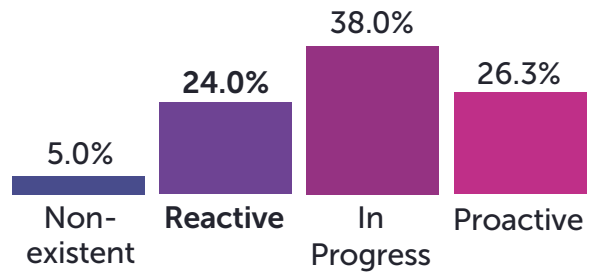
Fast facts:

**50.6%** have a documented process for handling accessibility complaints.

73.0% have dedicated staff to support people with disabilities.

More on resolving customer / user accessibility issues on page 44.

Engagement with the disability community

☺ **Weighted Average Maturity Rating—2.3 out of 3.0—"In Progress"**

51.4% of respondents rated their organization's engagement with the disability community as "Proactive."

8.6% — Non-existent
8.6% — Reactive
31.4% — **In Progress**
51.4% — Proactive
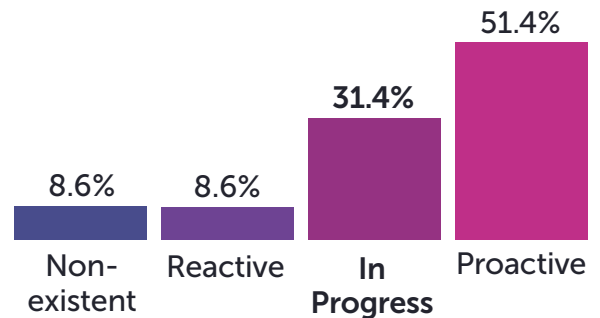
Fast facts:

89.0% of organizations surveyed have a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) program or department.

**69.4%** of those D&I programs / departments include digital accessibility[1].

More on Human Resources, and Diversity and Inclusion programs on page 46.

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[1] This statistic may not reflect the job market at large based on the self-selecting nature of the survey.

Internal accessibility scorecard

☺ Weighted Average Maturity
Rating—2.1 out of 3.0—"In Progress"

Most accessibility auditing professionals rated their internal accessibility scorecard as "In Progress."

49.5%

28.9%

14.1%

3.4%

Non-existent | Reactive | **In Progress** | Proactive
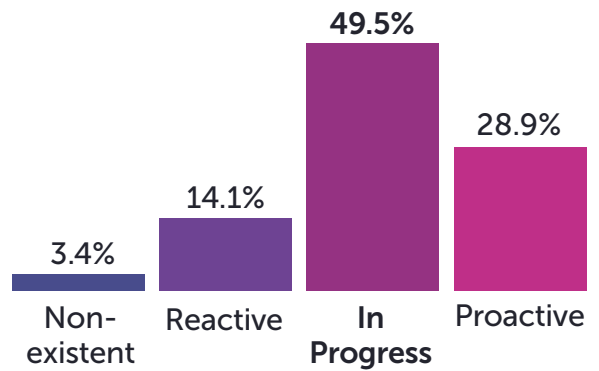
Fast facts:

More than half of survey respondents with accessibility auditing duties (**56.2%**) report they have conducted a formal accessibility audit in the past six months.

More on accessibility audits on page 34.

70.2% have audited in the past year.

8.9% have never conducted a formal audit.

Policies and procedures for procuring accessible software and hardware

☺ Weighted Average Maturity
Rating—2.1 out of 3.0—"In Progress"

The majority of respondents in procurement roles rated their accessibility policies and procedures as "In Progress."

54.4%

31.5%

5.4% | **7.6%**

Non-existent | Reactive | **In Progress** | Proactive
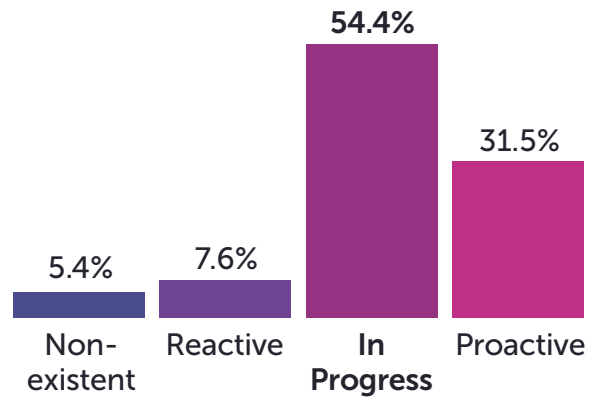
Fast facts:

73.7% said they have prioritized buying a product or solution because of its accessibility.

58.7% said they required a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT®) or other conformance report before making a purchase.

More on buying and selling accessible products on page 47.

Funding for accessibility

☺	Weighted Average Maturity Rating—2.0 out of 3.0—"In Progress"

36.7% of survey respondents rated their organization's funding for accessibility programs as "In Progress."

Chart: Funding for accessibility maturity
- Non-existent: 7.2%
- Reactive: 18.3%
- **In Progress**: 36.7%
- Proactive: 32.8%
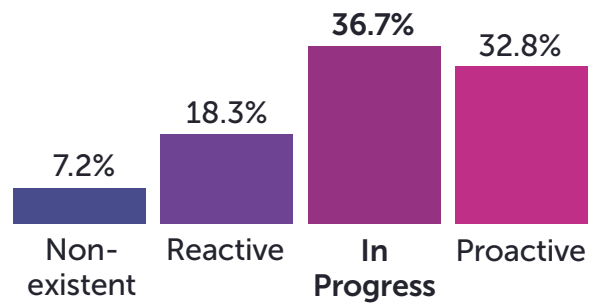
Fast facts:

Most accessibility programs have their budget distributed among the departments responsible; only **27.2%** have a centralized budget.

12.7% reported that their organization had no budget for accessibility programs, down from **20.6%** in 2021.

Training programs and policies

☺	Weighted Average Maturity Rating—1.83 out of 3.0—"Reactive"

In 2022, **62.7%** of respondents reported their organization provided training on accessibility topics, a jump from **52.6%** in 2021.

Chart: Training programs and policies maturity
- Non-existent: 12.9%
- **Reactive**: 17.5%
- In Progress: 41.9%
- Proactive: 26.4%
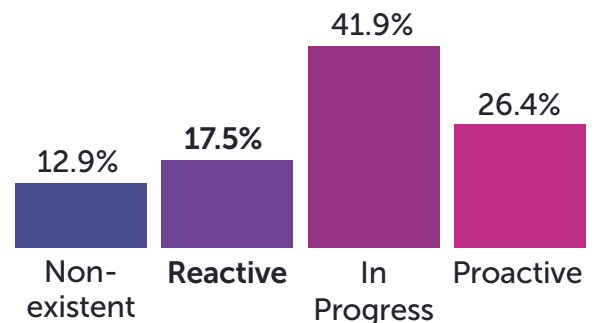
Content publishing practices and process

Weighted Average Maturity Rating—1.86 out of 3.0—"Reactive"

While most respondents rated their content authoring accessibility gates and practices as "In Progress," the weighted average is "Reactive."

49.8% In Progress
19.9% Reactive
7.8% Non-existent
21.7% Proactive
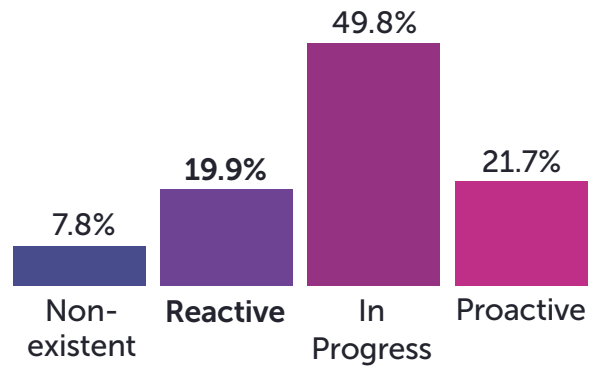
Fast facts:

39.7% of survey participants stated they had accessibility challenges caused by "too many content creators."

61.1% caption their video content, with **43.0%** of them choosing to outsource the task.

69.6% of content creators tag their PDFs for accessibility before publishing.

Testing gates and practices

Weighted Average Maturity Rating—1.9 out of 3.0—"Reactive / In Progress"

The majority of survey respondents in QA roles rated their organization's accessibility testing gates and practices as "In Progress."

46.2% In Progress
21.4% Reactive
6.1% Non-existent
23.7% Proactive
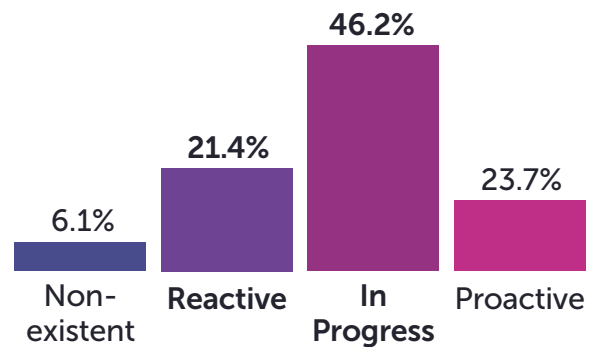
Fast facts:

96.5% agree that testing by people with disabilities is important, but only **58.5%** of organizations say they are doing it.

Roughly half (**48.7%**) of organizations that practice continuous integration (CI) test for accessibility during the CI process.

Engineering gates and practices

| :| Weighted Average Maturity Rating—1.75 out of 3.0—"Reactive" |

Most survey respondents in development roles rated engineering accessibility gates and practices as "In Progress."

46.2%

24%

19.1%

10.2%

Non-existent   Reactive   **In Progress**   Proactive
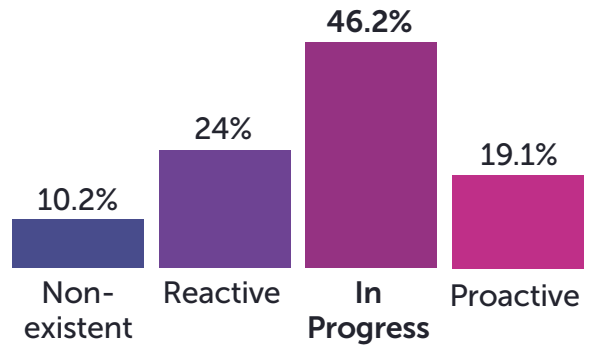
Fast facts:

82.5% of Development teams think about accessibility before building begins.

More on product development on page 26.

66.0% reported that accessibility was part of the development requirements for their most recent project; however, **34.7%** of those teams did not understand how to meet those requirements.

Product Development

The longer an organization waits to incorporate accessibility, the greater the chance that the product will be inaccessible (and more expensive and time-consuming to retrofit).

When a product team considers accessibility from the start, they can iterate, test, learn, and develop a more accessible, more universally usable product.

Accessibility teams scale alongside their development team.

Ideally, every developer should have been trained on, and be responsible for accessibility. The reality, however, is quite different. In 2022, **42.9%** of organizations have between one and three people who work primarily on accessibility.

As product development teams grow, so do their accessibility teams. The 2022 survey numbers reported below can be used to justify an increased budget for accessibility experts.

Most organizations report having one to three developers working primarily on accessibility.

<25 Developers			
14.6%	63.4%	15.9%	3.7%
none	1-3	4-10	>10

25-99 Developers			
29.5%	34.1%	20.5%	6.8%
none	1-3	4-10	>10

100-249 Developers			
25.0%	37.5%	25.0%	4.2%
none	1-3	4-10	>10

250+ Developers			
8.6%	27.1%	24.3%	32.9%
none	1-3	4-10	>10
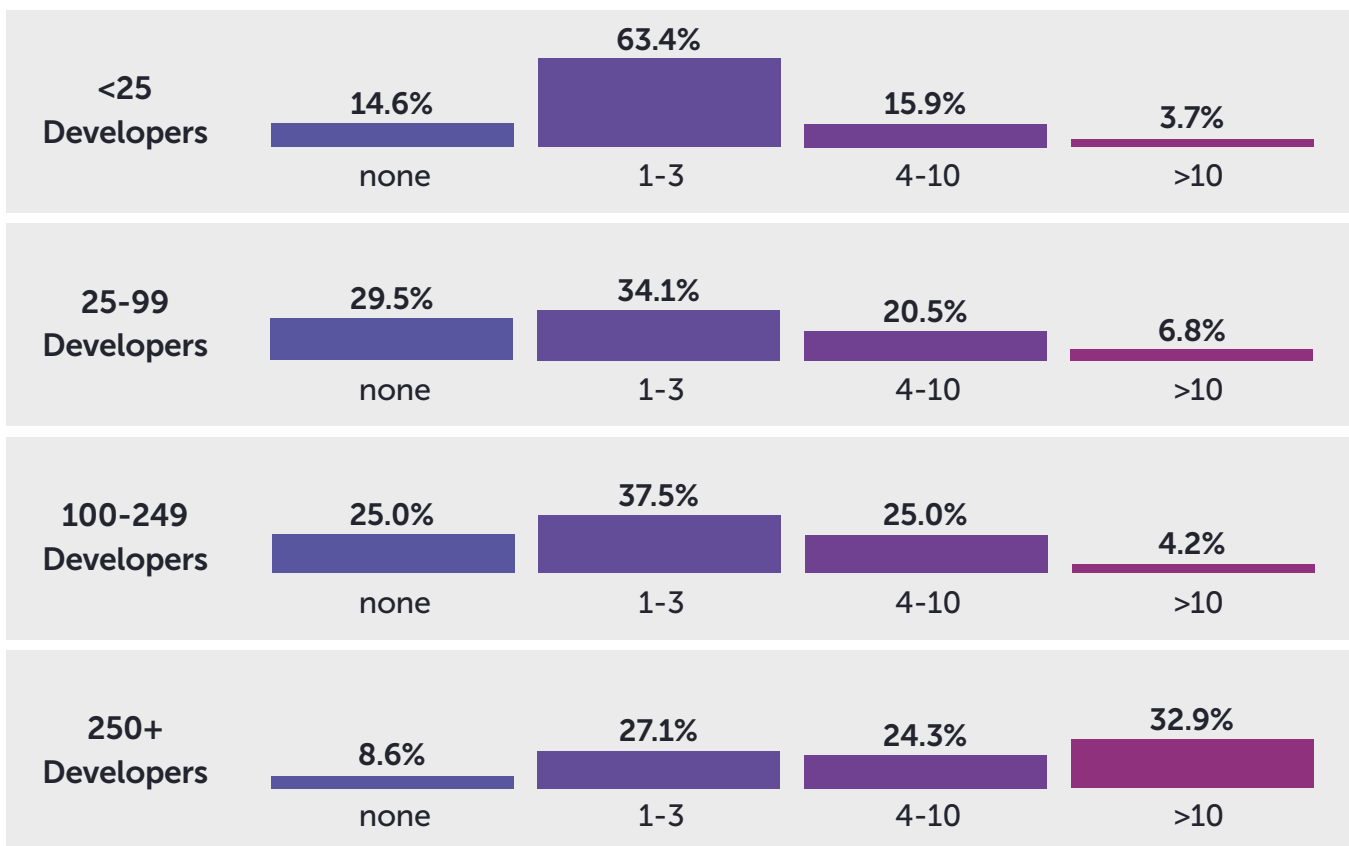
What affects the size of accessibility teams?

The survey analyzed the organizations with more than 10 people on their accessibility team, and a few factors stood out:

Organization size

46.9% have more than 50,000 employees

Access to expertise

23.4% have IAAP-certified personnel

50.3% partner with an accessibility vendor

Number of developers in the organization

71.9% have more than 250 developers

Accessibility has moved upstream.

82.6% of Development teams consider accessibility before building begins.

Planning	Defining	Designing	Building	Testing	Deployment
40.4%	10.0%	32.2%	8.7%	4.8%	3.9%
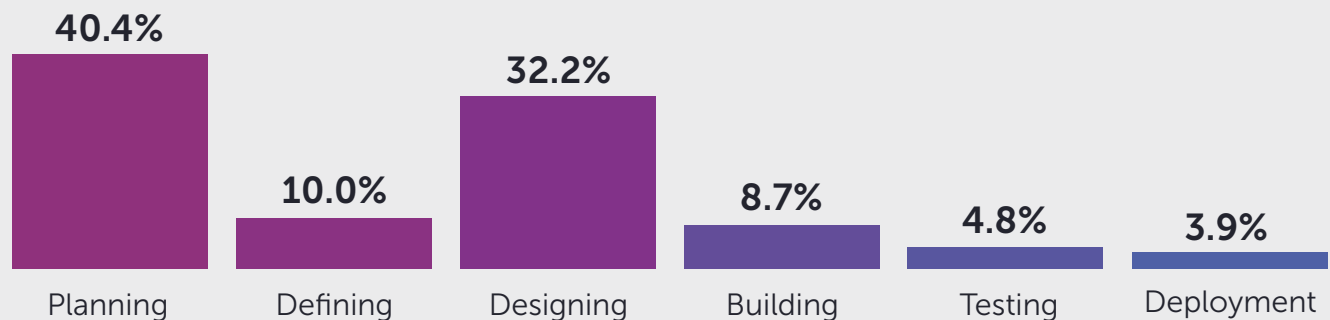
Accessibility and product requirements

The survey asked development professionals to think about their most recent project and pick the statement that best described it:

A

The product requirements included accessibility, and our team understood how to meet those requirements—**45.5%**.

B

The product requirements included accessibility, but our team did not understand how to meet those requirements—**26.2%**.

C

The product requirements did not mention accessibility at all—**28.3%**.

When product requirements included accessibility:

✔ The good news:

Accessibility is included in seven of 10 product requirements.

71.7% reported that accessibility was included in the product requirements.

✘ The bad news:

Some still report a lack of understanding and training on accessibility.

54.5% of the time, teams either did not understand how to implement accessibility, or it wasn't documented.

53.2% rated their Engineering and Development team's accessibility knowledge as "Elementary" or "Non-existent."

Testing Process

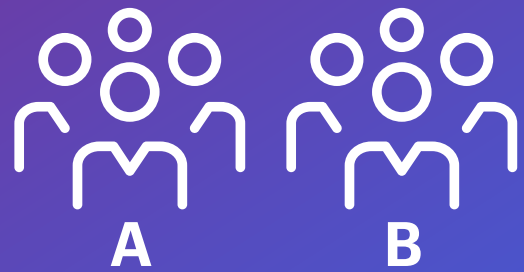The survey asked those in technical roles about user testing by people with disabilities, accessibility testing in continuous integration, and code-level unit tests.

A   B

Just more than half of organizations (**52.5%**) are testing their product by people with disabilities.

While **96.5%** agree that testing by people with disabilities is important, **37.3%** of organizations are not doing it. The latter number is down significantly from **47.2%** in the 2021 survey.

While automated and manual testing can identify many accessibility barriers, the best way to ensure an inclusive experience is to involve people with disabilities. Their experience is an invaluable part of the development process.

More established programs are more inclusive.

A clear trend appeared in the relationship between age of accessibility program and inclusion of people with disabilities. The older the program, the more likely it was to be inclusive. In fact, the age of accessibility program was more of a predictor than the overall size of the organization.

Includes People with Disabilities in Testing	33.3%	27.3%	48.1%	56.3%	54.8%	58.2%	90.0%
Accessibility Program Age	No program	0-1 years	2-3 years	4-6 years	7-10 years	11-20 years	20+ years

Continuous integration and accessibility testing

Continuous integration (CI) is the practice of merging all developers' working copies to the shared mainline several times a day. Testing for accessibility as part of the CI process is an excellent way to flag issues early in the process to head off future bottlenecks. The survey revealed that **67.3%** of organizations that practice continuous integration test for accessibility during the CI process. That's up from **56.0%** in 2021.

The types of organizations that were most likely to perform accessibility testing as part of the CI process varied greatly. Two program characteristics that were of interest emerged. First, programs that were in their early stages were highly likely to have implemented accessibility testing in their CI process, with two- to six-year-old accessibility programs leading the way. Second, programs that include IAAP-certified personnel were more likely than the average to have implemented a CI testing process.

Accessibility Testing Tools

Preferences for testing tools can change as an accessibility program matures and organizations acquire the knowledge and funding to operate efficiently and effectively.

Free accessibility testing tools

The majority of organizations—across all sizes, verticals, and maturity—use free tools. There are many free tools available, and despite their limitations, they can prove useful.

Do you use free accessibility tools?

91.0%
Yes
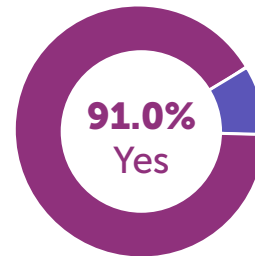
Browser extensions and site scan / web crawl services were the most frequently used free tools.

What type of free accessibility software or testing tools (non-assistive technology) do you use?

82.4%	Browser extensions and page testers
28.8%	Site scan or web crawl services
23.4%	Automated testing technology that integrates with your CI/CD tool
22.7%	Automated testing technology compatible with your test framework
22.5%	Linting tools
14.5%	CMS testing tools
13.6%	API calls to a testing engine
11.9%	Script-based web monitoring for pages
6.6%	Overlay-based remediation tools
5.6%	None of the above—we don't use free tools
5.6%	Other

Accessibility overlays

An overlay uses JavaScript to apply "fixes" to certain accessibility barriers by "overlaying" new code on the original code. An overlay technology does not fix the source code itself, and it can only flag accessibility errors that can be addressed programmatically.

The vast majority of those surveyed do not use overlays for accessibility, and for those that do, only a small percentage report using them as their primary approach.
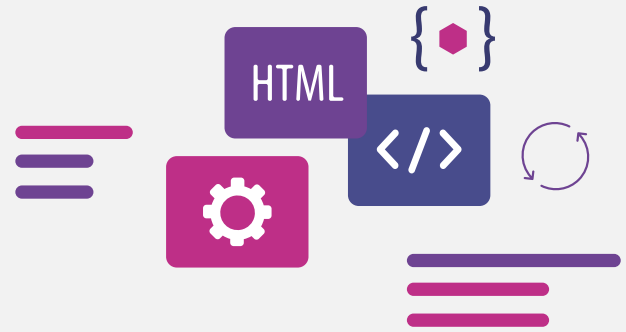
What best describes your organization's use of overlay solutions?

We are using them as our main compliance approach—**3.6%**

We are using them as a way to buy time to implement code-level fixes—**5.5%**

We are experimenting with them—**11.2%**

We do not use them—**79.7%**
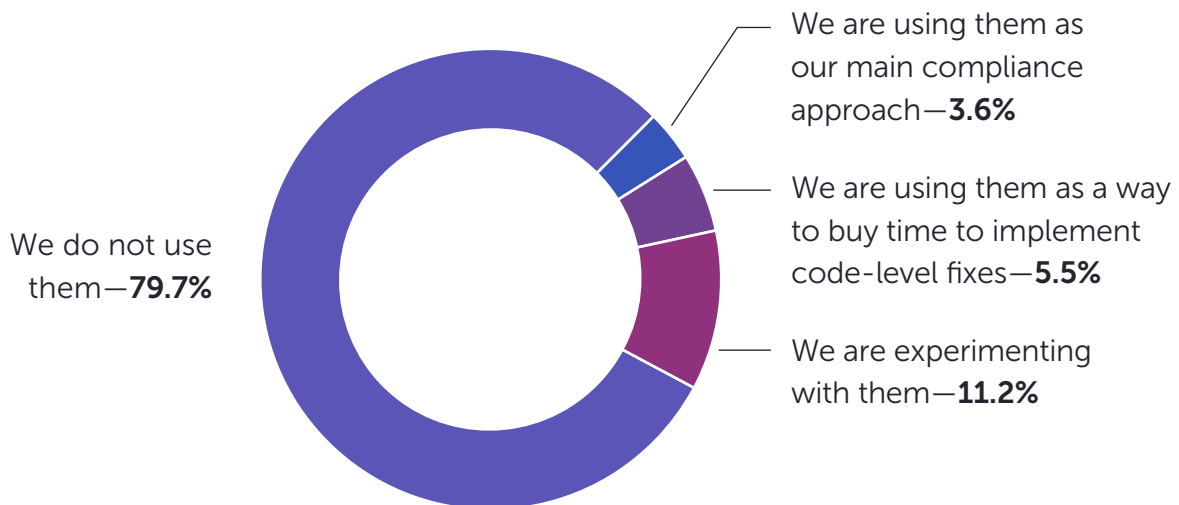
Validating accessibility in unit testing

The earlier accessibility issues can be found, the more cost-effective they are to fix. Running accessibility tests alongside standard unit tests is being adopted with increasing speed. The survey revealed that **40.0%** of organizations are validating accessibility requirements in unit testing, a significant jump from **22.8%** in 2021.

Assistive technology (AT) for testing

In order to ensure that a website or mobile app works with assistive technology, it should be tested with assistive technology. For more valuable insights, it is industry best practice for a person who uses AT on a daily basis to conduct this testing.

Most frequently used AT for testing

1. **84.0%**—Free screen reading software (e.g., NVDA)
2. **64.5%**—Mobile screen reading software (e.g., VoiceOver, TalkBack)
3. **55.9%**—Paid screen reading software (e.g., JAWS)
4. **52.2%**—Screen magnification / contrast (e.g., ZoomText/Fusion)

Mobile apps are tested with AT and accessibility system settings.

58.1% of those in QA roles reported that they tested mobile apps with assistive technology or accessibility system settings such as high contrast mode, large text, and magnification. This is a dip from **63.0%** in 2021.

58.1%
Yes
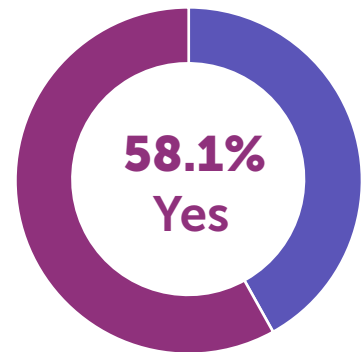
Overall accessibility program maturity rating for testing

36.5% of those in QA roles rated their organization's accessibility testing gates or practices as "In Progress." Only **22.1%** rated their development gates and practices as "Proactive".

Accessibility Monitoring Tools

Testing accessibility before launch is important, but maintaining accessibility is equally vital for every organization. Static websites are a thing of the past.

With many organizations updating their properties several times a day, inaccessible content can make its way into production. Monitoring tools ensure that these issues are found quickly—ideally before they pose a problem for a user or customer with a disability.

77.3% of those surveyed use monitoring tools on live, public-facing systems. This is a significant and encouraging jump from **33.0%** in 2021.

77.3%
Yes
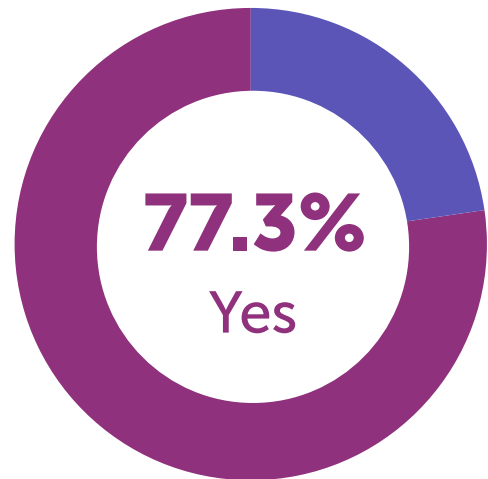
Auditing the Accessibility Audit

Many organizations complete digital accessibility audits on key properties. An audit gives an overview of the accessibility of the website or product. It includes automated testing, guided manual testing, and user testing. During this process, key user flows are checked to ensure that they are functional for people with disabilities.

86.0% of survey respondents with accessibility auditing duties reported their organization audits at least every other year, with the majority (**78.2%**) auditing annually or more frequently.

When was the last time your organization conducted a formal audit?

62.6%	Last 6 months
15.5%	Last year
7.9%	Last 2 years
1.7%	Last 3 years
2.3%	Over 3 years
9.9%	Never

Most likely to have audited within the past year

58.4%	Work with an accessibility vendor
48.2%	2- to 6-year-old accessibility program
43.2%	More than 5,000 employees

User Experience and Inclusive Design

The most effective approach to accessibility is to incorporate it in the design phase.

Organizations are making progress by focusing on implementing changes earlier, building toward a more inclusive design process.

90.0% of UX and Design professionals are actively considering accessibility.

Best practice dictates that thinking about accessibility should start before the product exists—and the survey participants agreed. Only **10.0%** of those surveyed said they do not consider accessibility at all when designing. Two out of three UX professionals reported thinking about accessibility in the prototyping stage.

In which stages of the process do you actively consider accessibility?
(Check all that apply)

User Research	Wireframing	Prototyping	User Testing	N/A
50.0%	57.8%	68.3%	56.9%	10.5%
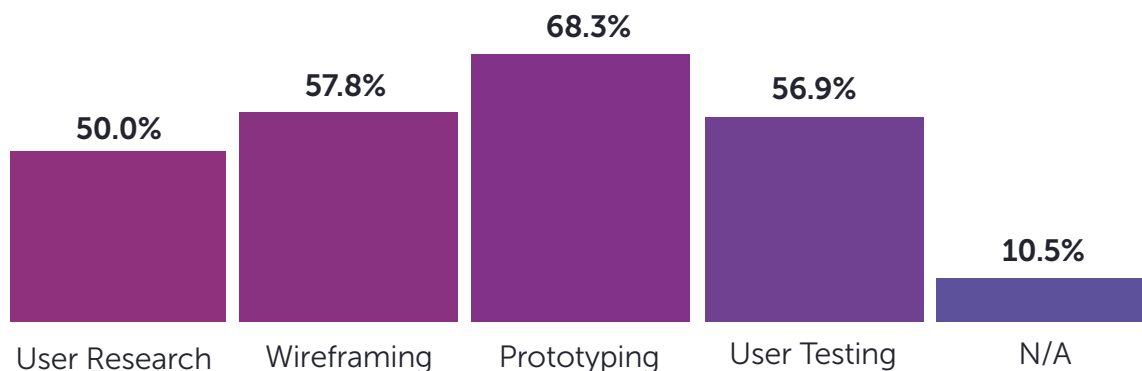
Despite this, 45.8% of Design professionals reported they do not get any feedback from people with disabilities.

Many organizations make great efforts to include people with disabilities in their work. However, there is room for improvement.

Manual testing is most effective when the testing is conducted by a person who is a daily user of an AT like a screen reader. It is even more effective when people who are native users of AT conduct usability testing.

## 25.5% of UX / Design professionals surveyed said they include people with disabilities in the user research phase of a project.

It's common to see a summary usability study before a product launches or before a major release. In fact, **46.4%** of those surveyed reported that people with disabilities were involved in user testing. But the best results come when meaningful representation is in every phase of the process.

In which stages of the process do you get feedback from people with disabilities?
(Check all that apply)

User Research	User Testing	Wireframing	Prototyping	N/A
25.5%	46.4%	11.8%	20.3%	45.8%
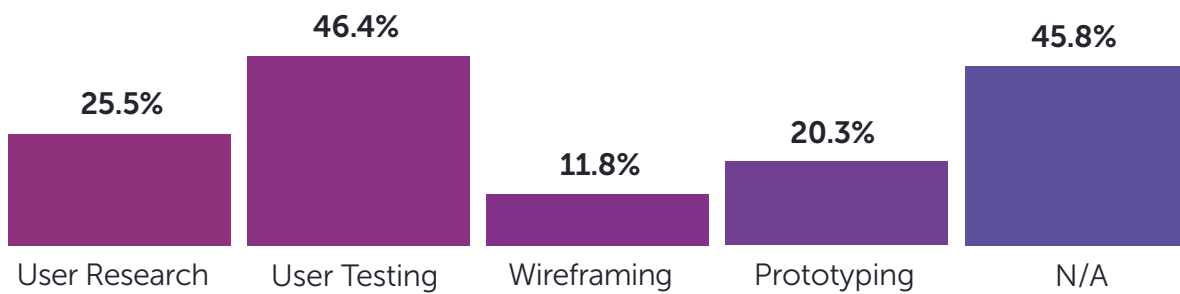
Accessibility and design requirements

The survey asked UX and Design professionals to reflect on their most recent project and select the statement that best described it:

A

The design requirements included accessibility, and our team understood how to meet those requirements—**45.9%**.

B

The design requirements included accessibility, but our team did not understand how to meet those requirements—**27.1%**.

C

The design requirements did not mention accessibility at all—**27.0%**.

	Accessibility is included in most design requirements.
✓ **The good news:**	**73.0%** reported that accessibility was part of the design requirements, and nearly half reported that their team understood how to meet the accessibility requirements.

	Many still report a lack of accessibility understanding and training.
✗ **The bad news:**	**54.1%** of the time, teams did not understand how to meet accessibility requirements.
	More than **40.0%** rated their Design /UX team's accessibility knowledge as "Elementary."

Partnering with an accessibility vendor results in a more accessible component library.

The survey revealed that organizations that partnered with an accessibility vendor—even short-term—leveraged that relationship to develop a more accessible component library.

Organizations that have customized their UI framework to make components more accessible

89.9%

77.8%

All

Partner with an accessibility vendor
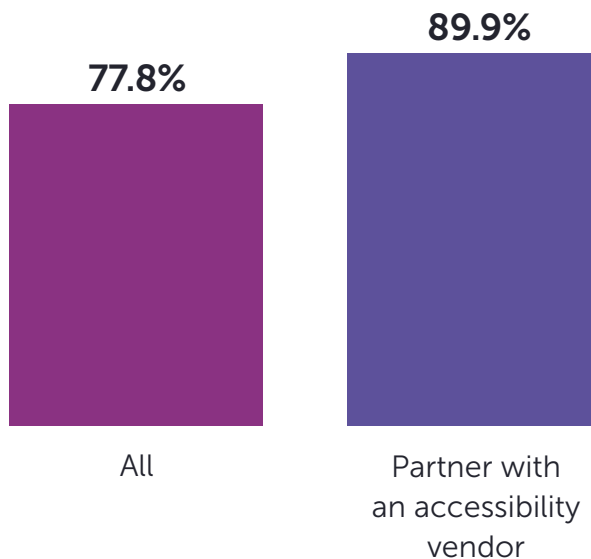
Content Creation

Every organization creates content—whether it's educational materials, marketing collateral, or digital documents. Many organizations update their content on a daily basis. With this fast-paced "content velocity," accessibility can easily fall through the cracks. Accordingly, a clear theme has arisen from the survey results: you're more likely to launch inclusive content if best practices are baked into the initial creation process.

The good news is that 55.6% of organizations are verifying content accessibility before a new asset is published, which is up from 47.9% in 2021.

Content publication practices and procedures

The survey provided a glimpse into the operating procedures of Content Creation teams. It found that while many organizations are thinking about accessibility, they haven't always implemented appropriate practices and procedures.

39.7% of survey participants stated they had accessibility challenges caused by "too many content creators." This was especially true for those in Education (**51.9%**) and in large organizations with more than 1,000 employees (**58.6%**).

Without proper training—which **51.4%** of all participants identified as a challenge—it is difficult to ensure that all published content is accessible.

Ideally, the content creation process would flow from Content Creator to Content Reviewer to Accessibility Reviewer to publication. However, this is only the case in **34.9%** of organizations.

Content Creator → Content Reviewer → Accessibility Reviewer →
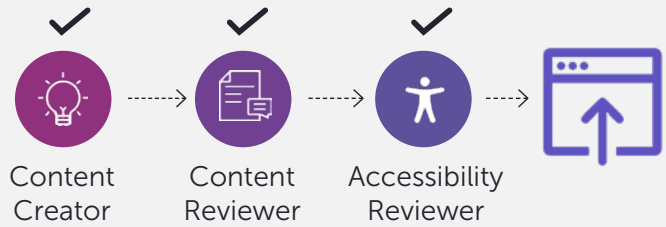
16.0% of Content Creators said that content is self-published by the author with no checks for content accessibility.

20.7% of Content Creators self-check for accessibility before publishing.

28.5% of Content Creators have someone else review the content before publishing, but do not check for accessibility.

What to check is similarly nebulous: content accessibility checklists are either non-existent or used in a non-standard fashion, with only **17.2%** of Content Creators reporting use of a content creation checklist whenever new content is published.

Is there a checklist used to verify the accessibility of new content before it is published?

17.2% Yes, it is a written procedure and gets used every time.

23.3% Yes, it is a written procedure and gets used sometimes.

18.1% Yes, but it's not written down.

41.4% No.
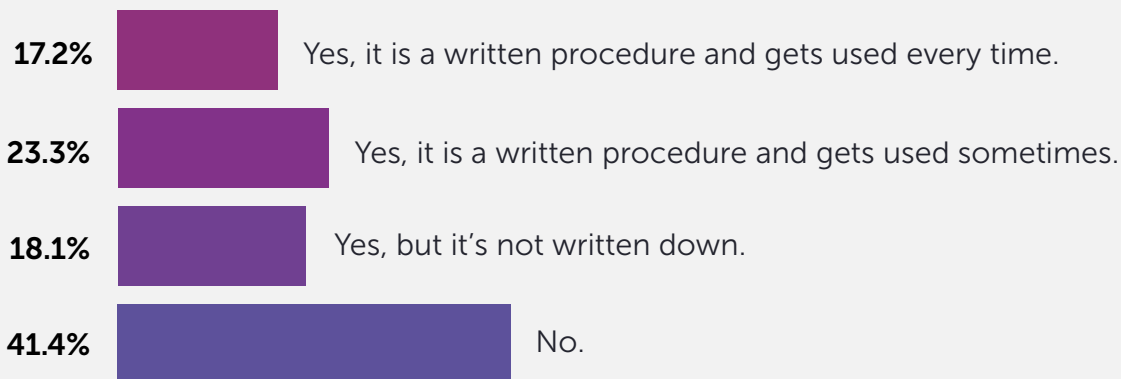
Electronic documents

Beyond web content, electronic documents also need to be accessible to people with disabilities.

The most commonly reported electronic document types:

94.5%	84.7%	76.0%	60.1%	34.4%
PDF	MS Word	MS PowerPoint	MS Excel	Google Docs

PDF accessibility is a common area of focus among respondents. Survey results reveal **69.6%** of respondents tag their PDFs for accessibility.

Social media accessibility

From Facebook to TikTok and LinkedIn to Instagram, accessible social media content is a must for any organization that values inclusion. 2022 survey results were broadly in line with those of 2021 in areas related to accessible social media.

72.3%

Use alternative (alt) text for images (down from **75.5%** in 2021)

Images that convey information should have alt text so that information is available to those who are blind, have low vision, or process audio information better than visual information.

61.5%

Caption audio and video content (down from **62.2%** in 2021)

Captions provide equal access to those who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have difficulty processing information they hear. They are also helpful for those who choose to mute their mobile devices.

54.2%

Provide the same content on different channels (up from **50.0%** in 2021)

Duplicating content ensures that an organization's message is reaching as many of their users as possible, especially when the accessibility of different applications is a concern.

50.6%

Use WCAG-compliant color contrast for images with text (up from **43.9%** in 2021)

To meet WCAG 2.0 level A, there should be a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text. To meet AAA guidelines, the ratios are 7:1 for normal text and 4.5:1 for large text.

48.2%

Use CamelCase hashtags (up from **41.5%** in 2021)

To increase readability by people of all abilities, it is helpful to capitalize each word of a multi-word hashtag (e.g., #CamelCaseHashtags vs. #camelcasehashtags).

31.3%

Note media type for URLs (up from **14.6%** in 2021)

One "above and beyond" feature is to help your users predict the outcome of clicking on a social media link. This can be as simple as adding [VIDEO] or [PDF] after the link.

30.1%

Provide the same content in different formats (up from **22.0%** in 2021)

Another way to go "above and beyond" for users is to provide the same content in different formats. This gives them a choice to consume content in a way that works best for them. An example would be having the same information available in a video and as an article on your website and linking to both options.

20.5%

Use audio description for videos (up from **12.2%** in 2021)

Audio description is a secondary audio track where a narrator describes the action on screen so those who are blind or have low vision can access the information more fully.
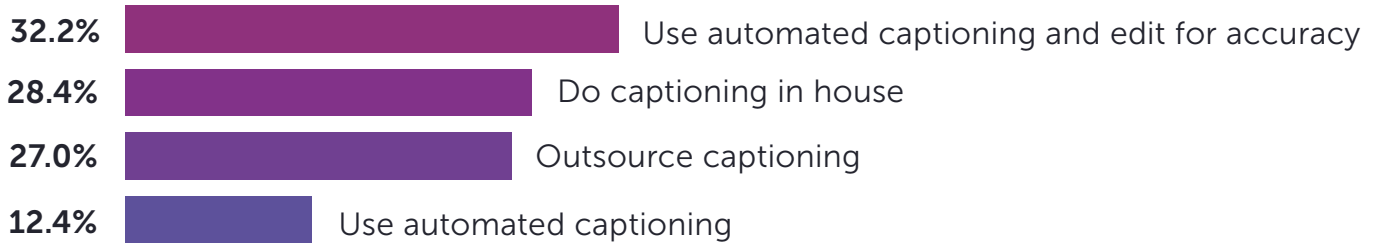
19.3%

Verify that shared or retweeted content is accessible (up from **12.2%** in 2021)

While most social media managers do their best to share accessible content, they often draw the line at verifying third-party created content.

Video content, webinars, and live-streams

Captions are important for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, but they are also helpful to those with cognitive disabilities, and English language learners. The survey found that **61.1%** of respondents caption their video content (no change from 2021). Exactly how they caption their videos varies.

32.2% Use automated captioning and edit for accuracy

28.4% Do captioning in house

27.0% Outsource captioning

12.4% Use automated captioning

Level Access, eSSENTIAL Accessibility, G3ict, and IAAP recommend downloading 3PlayMedia's State of Captioning Report for in-depth data about captioning.

Webinars and live-streamed videos are becoming much more accessible, but the percentage dipped this year.

Of the organizations who host webinars and live-streamed videos, **11.9%** stated that their events were not accessible at all. This compares to only **7.5%** in 2021.

Inclusive Practice	2021	2022
Platform accessible to screen reader users	**52.7%**	**40.5%**
Live closed-captioning	**69.9%**	**58.3%**
Transcript following the event	**52.7%**	**42.9%**
Accessible to keyboard-only users	**38.7%**	**35.7%**
Webinar slides available in an accessible format	**57.0%**	**25.0%**
Live sign language interpreter	**21.5%**	**20.2%**

Having a sign language interpreter ensures that the most accurate information is being conveyed to the Deaf community. This is especially true if your organization uses a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI).

Customer Service and Accessibility Feedback

Implementing a documented process for handling and resolving accessibility complaints will ensure users have a way to report barriers they experience, and that your organization has a plan to address issues reported.

The majority of organizations are satisfied with their processes for dealing with accessibility complaints and feedback.

50.6% said their organization has a documented process for handling accessibility complaints and feedback.

56.1% felt that accessibility complaints are resolved in a timely manner.

Dedicated support for people with disabilities is on the rise.

In **20.2%** of organizations, everyone is trained to assist people with disabilities.

In an additional **52.8%** of organizations, there's at least one person on staff trained to assist people with disabilities.

That's a total of **73.0%** of organizations that have dedicated staff to support people with disabilities.

The position that manages and documents accessibility complaints varies widely.

No clear owner for accessibility complaints emerged in this year's survey.

In the slight majority of cases, accessibility complaints are managed along with another responsibility.

A position that manages accessibility feedback and other accessibility duties—**35.2%**
A position that manages accessibility feedback and other Product team duties—**15.1%**

In **24.6%** of cases, accessibility complaints are managed by those who manage general customer feedback.
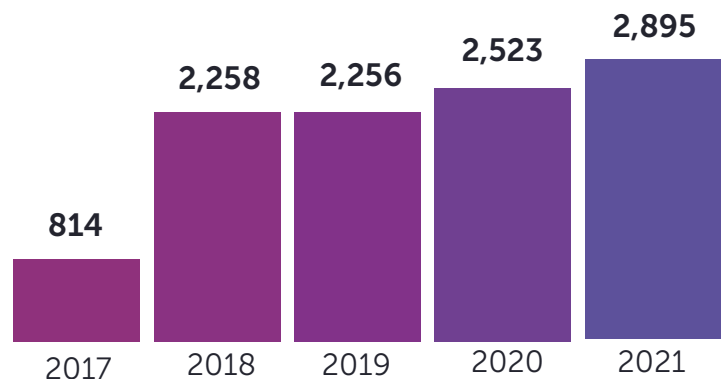
Lawsuits and Litigation

Year over year, plaintiffs continue to file web accessibility-related lawsuits against organizations whose digital experiences are not accessible.

ADA Title III Website Accessibility Lawsuits in Federal Court (2017-2021)

Source: Seyfarth Shaw LLP

Year	Lawsuits
2017	814
2018	2,258
2019	2,256
2020	2,523
2021	2,895

Legal risk is still a major driver for accessibility.

28.5% said their organization is addressing accessibility to avoid lawsuits or Office for Civil Rights (OCR) complaints.

The survey asked all participants to rank their organization's top three drivers for accessibility. While inclusion and good UX topped the list, legal drivers were still a concern for many organizations:

- Complying with laws—**58.0%**
- Avoiding lawsuits or OCR complaints—**28.4%**
- Complying with a legal settlement—**9.8%**

Lawsuits motivate compliance, and approximately one in five surveyed has been sued more than once.

- **43.3%** of organizations surveyed reported that litigation trends have motivated them to move faster to achieve accessibility compliance.

- **18.0%** of organizations surveyed have been sued more than once because of digital accessibility.

Internal expenses quickly add up.

Although the majority of organizations reported spending up to 40 hours with internal teams working to resolve the complaint and bring their properties into compliance, it's worth noting that nearly **20.0%** said they spent more than 100 hours. Including accessibility in the budget will help mitigate some of the financial risk posed by lawsuits and demand letters.

Human Resources and Diversity and Inclusion Programs

According to the United States Department of Labor's Disability Labor Force Statistics, in the year 2022, **38.1%** of people with disabilities participated in the working-age (16-64) labor force, compared to **77.6%** of those without disabilities.
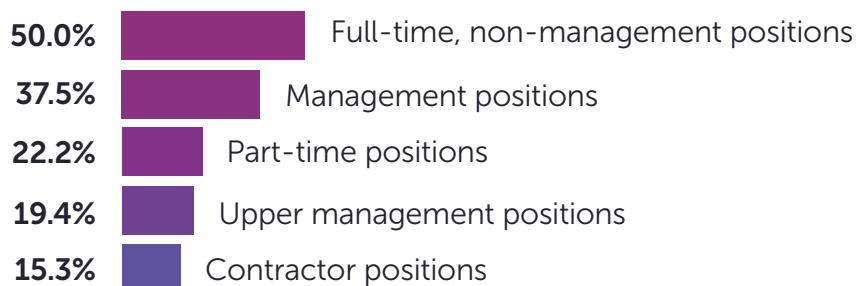
The 2021 State of Digital Accessibility survey was the first to ask questions about Human Resources. The 2022 survey does not delve deeply into this subject because Disability:IN produces an excellent report on the topic: The 2022 Disability Equality Index Report.

Survey participants employ people with disabilities at a higher rate.

The survey found that **95.8%** of organizations have people with disabilities represented in their workforce, up from **92.7%** in 2021[2].

Do people with disabilities work for your organization?
(Select all that apply)

50.0%	Full-time, non-management positions
37.5%	Management positions
22.2%	Part-time positions
19.4%	Upper management positions
15.3%	Contractor positions

Diversity and Inclusion programs

89.0% have a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) program or department, which is up from **83.6%** in 2021.

69.4% of those D&I programs / departments include digital accessibility.

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2 This statistic may not reflect the job market at large based on the self-selecting nature of the survey.

Buying and Selling Accessible Technology

Those buying technology want to make sure the systems they purchase are usable by people with disabilities and meet accessibility standards. The most common method for determining accessibility remains via a review of documentation detailing conformance—typically an accessibility conformance report (ACR) or VPAT from technology vendors. Proof of product accessibility is also making its way into both public and private-sector RFPs (request for proposal). Organizations are asking for this proof because they need to purchase technology that is accessible for employees and customers with disabilities.

The majority of buyers want accessible technology.

The survey found that **73.7%** of organizations have prioritized buying a product or solution because of its accessibility.

Only **6.5%** said they do not ask vendors to provide proof of accessibility before purchasing a product or solution (down from **9.2%** in 2021).

55.2% 2020
71.4% 2021
73.7% **2022**
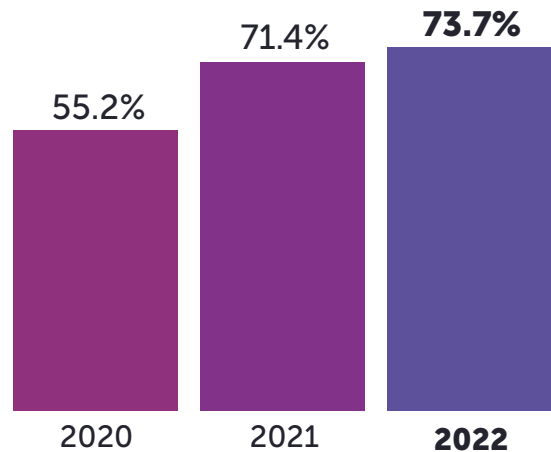
58.7%
required a VPAT or other conformance report.

51.1%
asked questions about compliance with accessibility standards.

20.7%
requested a trial of the product by employees with disabilities.

Accessibility is called out as a deciding factor nearly 40.0% of the time.

In the 2022 survey, **38.6%** reported that their product's level of accessibility was called out as a reason for purchase.

Training, Education, and Certification

Lack of training continues to be a common obstacle among organizations seeking to improve their digital accessibility. It has ranked in the top three challenges every year since the report launched in 2019.

Training gaps are impacting Design / UX and Development teams.

73.0% of Design / UX professionals reported that accessibility was part of the design requirements on their last project. However, **37.0%** of those people did not understand how to meet those requirements.

40.8% rated their Design / UX team's accessibility knowledge as "Elementary."

71.6% of Developers reported that accessibility was part of the development requirements of their most recent project. However, **36.6%** of those people did not understand how to meet those requirements.

46.4% rated their Development team's accessibility knowledge as "Elementary."

Where is the disconnect?
Training is available for:

62.7%	of those in QA Testing roles
59.0%	of those in UX and Design roles
57.4%	of those in Development roles
46.8%	of those in Digital Content roles

While training has largely been made available, it is unclear if this training is being completed or if the training achieves the desired impact. A commonly reported concern in the explanatory notes for responses in this section is that there is no learning management process in place to verify that training has been delivered and is effective.

In that regard, asking personnel to be certified by an independent professional organization such as IAAP helps maintain and expand the knowledge and skill set of those who are developing products.

Professional certifications communicate commitment to accessibility.

With more than 4,600 certified professionals, IAAP is establishing itself as the certification of reference for accessibility. The table below shows year-to-year progress in notoriety and actual adoption by organizations. With four exams covering specific accessibility job profiles with distinct Bodies of Knowledge, IAAP's certifications constitute a robust roadmap for building accessibility skills.

IAAP Certification	2020	2021	2022
Have considered IAAP Certification	21.8%	24.5%	30.3%
Have not considered IAAP Certification	36.0%	32.5%	26.7%
Already have IAAP-certified personnel	15.8%	19.9%	23.4%
Have never heard of IAAP certification	26.4%	23.1%	19.6%

The data revealed benefits to having certified personnel.

Accessibility knowledge, skill building, and transfer of expertise result in enhanced accessibility for products and services. Organizations with IAAP-certified employees or contractors are more likely to:

- Have completed an accessibility audit in the past six months—**61.5%** vs. **56.2%** overall

- Have updated their UI component library to reflect accessibility best practices—**86.4%** vs. **77.8%** overall

- Rate their design practices as "Proactive"—**32.8%** vs. **23.1%** overall

- Consider accessibility in the earliest planning stages of the development lifecycle—**57.1%** vs. **40.4%**

- Have better accessibility training programs. Organizations with IAAP-certified employees or contractors ranked training as the number-seven challenge, whereas it was in the top three for all other subgroups.

IAAP
International Association
of Accessibility Professionals
A division of G3ict

IAAP certifications are modeled after job profiles, and can serve as a useful roadmap to develop consistent training plans that build skills across the organization.

About eSSENTIAL Accessibility + Level Access

eSSENTIAL Accessibility and Level Access empower organizations with the advanced software and expert managed services they need to create accessible and legally compliant websites, mobile apps, digital products, and documents. Our mission is to achieve digital equality for all users by ensuring technology is accessible to people with disabilities and the growing aging population.

Why partner with eSSENTIAL Accessibility + Level Access?

- Over 20 years in digital accessibility and only digital accessibility—an unparalleled history in helping customers achieve and maintain compliance
- A comprehensive suite of software, expert services, and training solutions
- Experienced testers, including many with disabilities who use assistive technologies

Learn more about digital accessibility products and services at levelaccess.com or essentialaccessibility.com.

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About G3ict

G3ict's objectives and global outreach are aligned with the dispositions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on the accessibility of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Assistive Technologies.

What does G3ict do?

- Promote awareness of digital accessibility and of effective public policies, private sector initiatives, and accessibility standards;
- Support advocates and policy makers with capacity building programs, policy development tools and benchmarking;
- Facilitate and share good practices and innovation in accessible and assistive technologies;
- Foster harmonization and standardization to achieve lower costs and interoperability on a global scale;
- Define and promote the accessibility profession through networking, education and certification.

For more information, please visit g3ict.org.

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About IAAP

The International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP) is a not-for-profit association focused on advancing the accessibility profession globally through networking, education, and certification in order to enable the creation of accessible products, content, and services for persons with disabilities. **For more information, please visit** accessibilityassociation.org.

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