

# Access Changes Everything Inc.

## Business Online Accessibility for Nova Scotians with Disabilities Survey Report

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## Thank You

This project was made possible by funding from the [Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program](#). Access Changes Everything Inc. thanks the Province of Nova Scotia for their support of this project. As well, thank you to the survey respondents for sharing their lived experiences.

## Project Creator

Lisa Snider from Access Changes Everything Inc. (ACE) created this project. More information can be found in [Appendix A: About Access Changes Everything Inc.](#)

## Project Summary

Almost 38% of Nova Scotians, over the age of 15, identify as having at least one disability (Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022, Statistics Canada). It is **vital** that business online digital materials and media be made more accessible, for Nova Scotians with different disabilities.

In December 2022, Lisa Snider, from [Access Changes Everything Inc.](#), conducted a survey titled, Business Online Accessibility for Nova Scotians with Disabilities. This 'First Voice' survey asked Nova Scotians with disabilities, and organizations or individuals who support us, to share lived experiences from online interactions with Nova Scotia businesses.

The survey charted the overall accessibility of Nova Scotia businesses online, what they did well, and what needed improvement. The survey results were used to form the [Quick Start Guide to Digital Accessibility For Nova Scotia Businesses](#).

The goal of this guide is to help businesses in Nova Scotia start to identify, and lower, barriers in the digital realm. It will also support compliance with the [Accessibility Act, Goods and Services, and Information and Communication standards](#).

Full access to Nova Scotia businesses online, without barriers, is crucial. With more awareness of lived experiences, and knowledge of how to lower barriers, businesses in Nova Scotia can become accessible for all.

## Survey Promotion

The survey was promoted through 80 emails, from December 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. These were sent to individuals, businesses, organizations, and government departments, all over Nova Scotia.

The emails included the SurveyMonkey link, and a link to the project webpage: <https://www.accesschangepseverything.com/business-online-accessibility-for-nova-scotians-with-disabilities-survey/>

There was an option of entering a draw for a limited supply of \$10 e-gift cards. Personal information provided by those who took this option, was removed, and deleted after use.

## Survey Results

### Location

Survey respondents were asked a required question, 'Where do you live in Nova Scotia?'. 77 of the 79 who responded, answered the question. The respondents came from all over the province, with the majority from rural Nova Scotia.

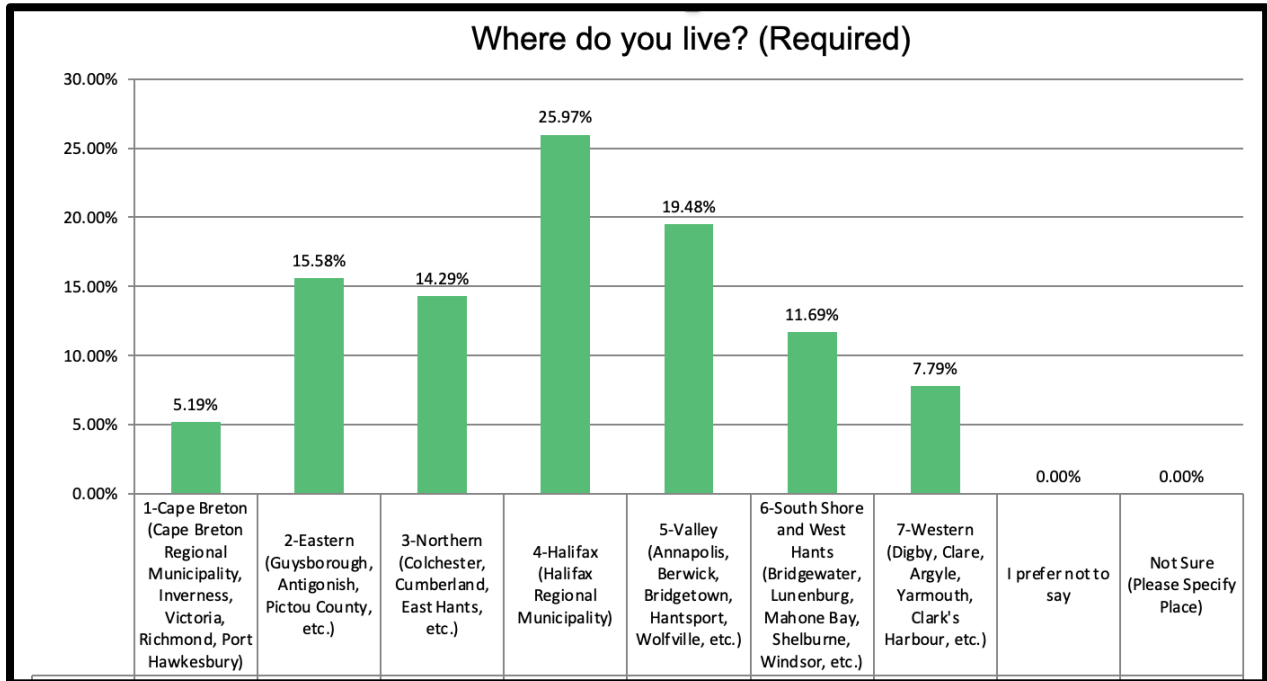
A quarter of the respondents, 25.97%, were from Halifax and the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The second largest respondent group, at 19.48%, were from the Valley. After that, 15.58% were from Eastern Nova Scotia, 14.29% from Northern, 11.69% from the South Shore and West Hants, 7.79% were from Western, and finally 5.19% were from Cape Breton. The option of 'I prefer not to say' was not chosen by any respondent.

The exact breakdown of locations and respondents is:

- 20 were from Halifax (Halifax Regional Municipality)
- 15 were from the Valley (Annapolis, Berwick, Bridgetown, Hantsport, Wolfville, etc.)
- 12 were from Eastern (Guysborough, Antigonish, Pictou County, etc.)
- 11 were from Northern (Colchester, Cumberland, East Hants, etc.)
- 9 were from the South Shore and West Hants (Bridgewater, Lunenburg, Mahone Bay, Shelburne, Windsor, etc.)
- 6 were from Western (Digby, Clare, Argyle, Yarmouth, Clark's Harbour, etc.)
- 4 were from Cape Breton (Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Inverness, Victoria, Richmond, Port Hawkesbury, etc.)

- 2 Declined to note area

**Chart 1: Location**



## Disability Information

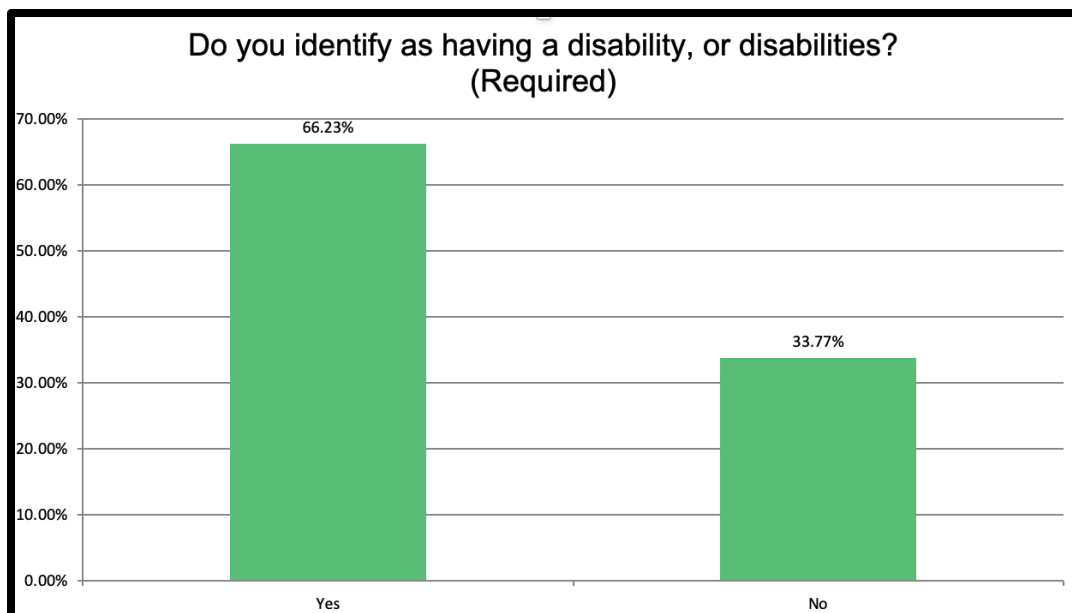
Survey respondents were asked a required question, 'Do you identify as having a disability, or disabilities?'.

Out of the 79 survey respondents, 66.23% identified with having at least one disability. The other 33.77% of respondents did not identify as having a disability. 2 people declined to answer the question.

The exact breakdown of responses is:

- 51 people chose Yes, I identify as having a disability or disabilities.
- 26 people chose No, I don't identify as having a disability or disabilities.
- 2 people declined to answer the question

**Chart 2: Disability**



The 51 respondents who identified as having at least one disability were asked an optional question, 'What types of disability, or disabilities, do you have?'. They could choose from six general disability types.

Broad disability types were used, so that no one person could be identified in this public report. Two other choices were offered, 'I prefer not to say', and 'Other disabilities', where respondents could add disabilities. Respondents could choose more than one answer, so percentages may be more than 100%.

The exact breakdown of responses is:

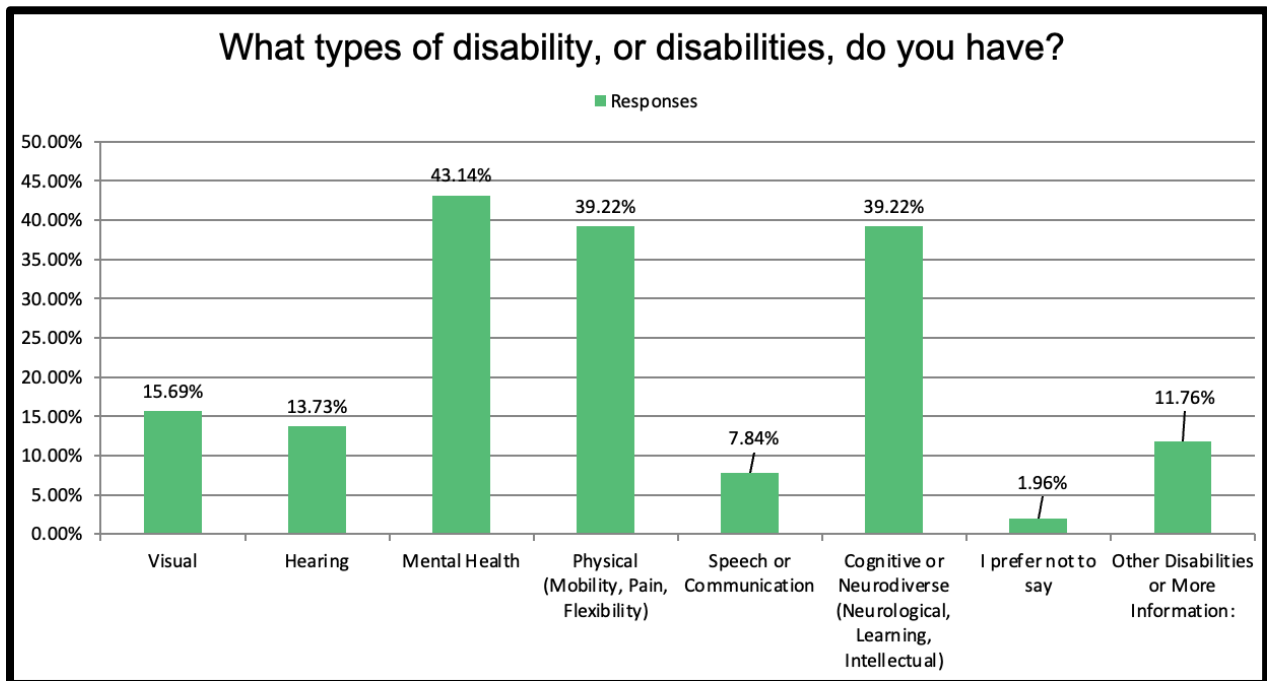
- 22, or 43.14%, chose Mental Health
- 20, or 39.22%, chose Cognitive or Neurodiverse (Neurological, Learning, Intellectual)
- 20, or 39.22%, chose Physical (Mobility, Pain, Flexibility)
- 8, or 15.69%, chose Visual
- 7, or 13.73%, chose Hearing
- 6, or 11.76%, chose Other disabilities
- 4, or 7.84%, chose Speech or Communication
- 1, or 1.96%, chose I prefer not to say

Mental health disabilities were the most common disability type chosen by respondents. Cognitive or Neurodiverse, and physical disabilities, were second and third. After that,

were visual, hearing, and speech or communication disabilities. 1 person chose not to say. Finally, 11.76% of respondents chose other disabilities, and these included:

- Parkinson's (this could be added to Cognitive)
- Type 1 diabetic
- Eating disorder
- Charge syndrome

**Chart 3: Disability Type(s)**



## Respondent Type

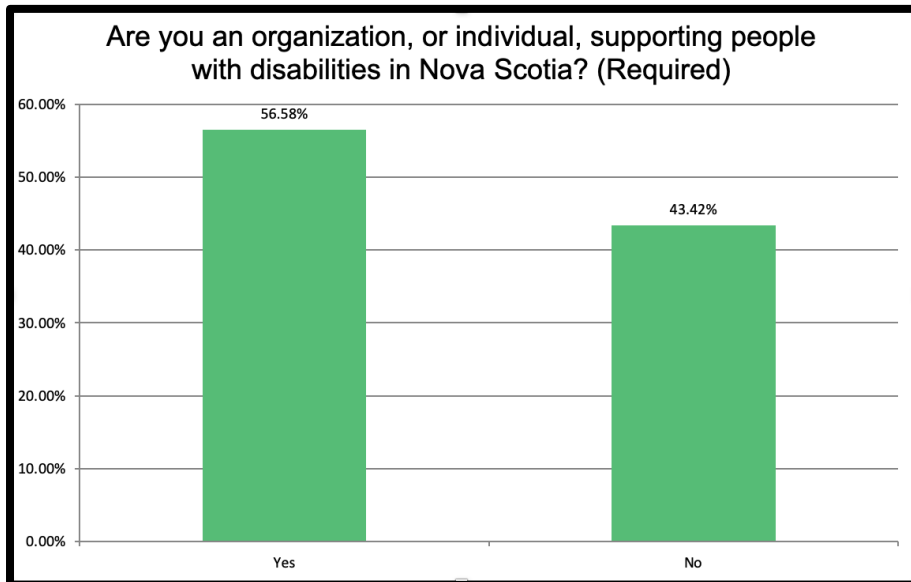
Survey respondents were asked a required question, 'Are you an organization, or individual, supporting people with disabilities in Nova Scotia?'. Out of 79 respondents, 3 did not answer the question, but the other 76 respondents did answer. Of those 76 respondents, 56.58% said that they were an organization, or individual, supporting Nova Scotians with disabilities. 43.42% said that this did not apply to them.

The exact breakdown of responses is:

- 43 people chose yes, I am an organization or individual supporting Nova Scotians with disabilities.

- 33 people chose no, I am not an organization or individual supporting Nova Scotians with disabilities.
- 3 declined to answer the question

**Chart 4: Organization or Individual Supporting People with Disabilities**



Out of the 76 respondents who answered this question, 43 that said they were an organization, or individual, supporting Nova Scotians with disabilities. 36 of the 43 supplied more detailed information about their role, and who they support, for this optional question. All others skipped this question. Self-identifying information that could identify individuals has been generalized, to protect the respondent’s privacy.

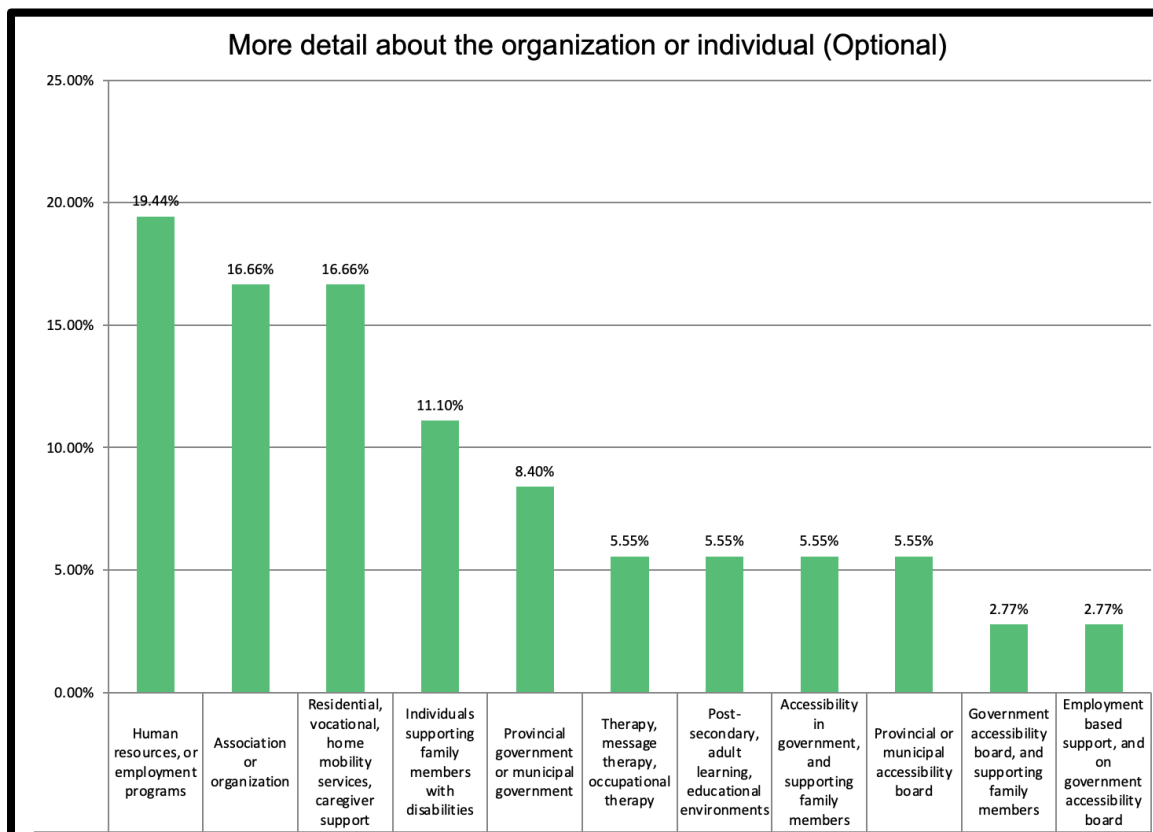
The breakdown is:

- 7 people, or 19.44%, were working in human resources, or with employee and employment programs. These may be government, businesses, or organizations.
- 6 people, or 16.66%, were association or organization executive directors, Chair, Vice-Chair, in other board member positions, volunteers, program managers, etc.
- 6 people, or 16.66%, were working in residential, vocational, home mobility services, mobility support, caregiver support, disability support worker, and other similar support programs.
- 4 people, or 11.10%, were supporting family members with disabilities.
- 3 people, or 8.40%, were working with accessibility in some capacity in the provincial government or municipal government in Nova Scotia. This can include

recreation services, libraries, accessibility coordinator, etc. This does not include employment, learning, or human resources specific positions.

- 2 people, or 5.55%, were working in therapy, message therapy, occupational therapy, and other similar support programs.
- 2 people, or 5.55%, were working in post-secondary, adult learning, or other educational environments. These may be government, businesses, or organizations.
- 2 people, or 5.55%, were working with accessibility in the provincial government or municipal government in Nova Scotia, and supporting family members with disabilities.
- 2 people, or 5.55%, were working as a member or volunteer on a government accessibility board, either provincially or at the municipal level.
- 1 person, or 2.77%, was working as a volunteer on a government accessibility board, either provincially or at the municipal level, and supporting family members with disabilities.
- 1 person, or 2.77%, was working with employment based support, and working as a volunteer on a government accessibility board, either provincially or at the municipal level.

**Chart 5: Details About Roles and Who Is Supported**





The largest percentage of the 36 respondents, at 19.44%, were those who supported people with disabilities in human resources, employee, and employment programs. Then, 16.66% were association or organization employees, volunteers, or board members. The other 16.66% were working in residential, vocational, home mobility services, caregiver support, disability support worker, and similar programs.

The rest of the respondents were individuals supporting family members, government employees, those who worked in therapy, message therapy, occupational therapy, those in educational support, and people in government accessibility boards. As well, there was one person on a government accessibility board, who supported family members, and another person on a government accessibility board, who was also in employment based support.

## **Barriers Found**

The first open ended optional question in the survey was, “What kind of barriers have you, or the people you support, found with Nova Scotia businesses online?”. The answers were analyzed, and then placed in one of seven categories:

1. General Barriers
2. Attitude Related Barriers
3. Internet, Training, and Technology Availability Barriers
4. Website, Video, Social Media, and Document Barriers
5. Communication Support Option Barriers
6. Human Support Barriers
7. Physical Barriers

Many respondents noted specific barriers in websites, video, social media, and documents. The most common barriers were:

- Missing video captions
- No alternative text for images
- Confusing or unclear navigation
- Text not being in plain language
- Text size too small and styling barriers
- Colour combinations and dark mode barriers
- PDF barriers

Many respondents felt strongly that businesses should provide both online and offline ways to contact them, buy items or services, etc. This should include the

communication option of using sign language. This would increase access to the business, and would result in more satisfied customers.

Some respondents were very clear that human support was critical to access. Awareness of accessibility and disability, when communicating with customers and providing support, is essential to avoid added barriers.

Respondents shared that human support was vital to their experience. As well, a few respondents noted that people with disabilities cannot afford, or lack access to, Wi-Fi, computers, devices with data, training, technology, etc. Providing quality human support can lessen those technology and internet barriers. Plus, it was noted that some people are not knowledgeable about technology or the internet, so offline human support would be crucial.

Awareness was also noted for both physical and digital spaces. There was stigma and stereotyping noted, as well as ableist jokes being told. Plus, awareness of the needs of diabetics while shopping should be considered by all businesses with a physical presence.

Finally, some respondents noted physical space accessibility barriers as well. They stressed that options would avoid barriers, such as offering delivery, as well as pick up. Keeping those options simple, and sending reminders on how to use them, were important. As well, mobile services should be considered, as not all Nova Scotians can get to the business itself. Note that with the cost of gas today, this would be beneficial for all living in rural areas.

Out of the 79 people who took the survey, 51, or 64.5%, answered the optional question in some way. Some of the responses were 'pulled apart', because they mentioned multiple barriers. These 'pulled apart' responses were put into more than one category.

Some of the responses were edited only for obvious typos, missing commas and words, and misspelling. Personal identifying information was removed to ensure confidentiality.

Out of the 51 respondents, one person did not enter in an answer. As well, 6 people answered with vague responses, such as 'not sure', or 'none that I am aware of'. The feedback below is from the remaining 44 respondents.

## **1. General Barriers**

- I struggle.
- I struggle with some things, like websites, apps and applications.

- Understanding.
- Website.
- Computer, social media.
- Lack of support, health care.

## **2. Attitude Related Barriers**

- Attitudinal, physical, social, transportation.
- Ableist jokes.
- Stigma, stereotypes.

## **3. Internet, Training, and Technology Availability Barriers**

- No access to affordable internet and lack of support for usage training.
- Low income households have limited access to internet or technology to use the internet.
- I've also heard from older adults that they don't have a computer, they don't use emails, and/or they don't have Internet. So those are huge barriers for people looking to access services.
- This subject has not been brought up in any meetings. I am sure there are an array of issues and concerns. Access to the technology alone still a concern given areas one resides in.
- Lacking basic /essential skills and access to accessories. Communication Barriers also.
- Email Transfers need to be accepted by businesses. Not everyone has a credit card, especially those who live in poverty. Purchasing products by EMT makes things more accessible for everyone.
- The biggest barriers I have seen are to do with the lack of digital literacy training. Statistically our population of peoples with disabilities are older, now pair that with the lack of digital knowledge and the growing need to be online and it becomes a large problem. In the library, clerks only have so much time to help when patrons may need a full training session on what is available on how to use. It's not as simple as making it available and it will be used.

## **4. Website, Video, Social Media, and Document Barriers**

### **General**

- Websites, accessible docs and Facebook posts.
- Websites are TERRIBLE.

- Most private businesses don't make the effort to have their websites user friendly for persons with disabilities.
- Websites are not screen reader friendly.
- Many PDFs, or other docs, are not screen readable - though technology is certainly improving.

## Videos

- When videos are being posted online they should always have the text on the screen as well for individuals with hearing impairments.
- Communication barriers: no closed captions on videos.
- Videos for low vision or blind and deaf and hard of hearing.
- American Sign Language lessons , technology communication for Deaf and vision impaired.
- No captions for video material.
- Not all websites or documents are user friendly for all levels of sight, hearing or comprehension levels (i.e. closed caption not always an option).

## Images

- [Websites and Screen Reader] No alt texts.
- Websites, docs, etc. not accessible by computerized screen reading software. Online orders impossible to complete, product information and descriptions inadequate or lacking completely. Pop up ads that I can't get rid of. Online presence based on the belief that everyone can see.
- Incompatibility with screen readers (e.g., ads that interfere with flow of speech, not reading what is on the screen, but something else, not recognizing image text, buttons that are not labeled correctly or can't be accessed using VoiceOver, etc.).
- Social media posts do not have alt text.
- Social media posts that don't include Alt text.

## Navigation

- Websites are difficult to navigate.
- Too complicated to navigate.
- Things are not clear and concise and can be confusing for people to navigate.
- Non-intuitive set up: Navigation may be difficult as options or menu bars may not be obvious, and you have to utilize the mouse to hover over and have these things appear.

- Sites are difficult to navigate through or find what you want.
- Lack of direction on where to go to find what you need.
- [It is hard] Having a full look at all their products and services and access into their stores.
- Links do not work, or its unclear whether it's a link or not.
- The websites or items on the website not being able to be expanded to read for the visual impaired.
- Not the information we are seeking.

### **Plain Language**

- Language used on websites is difficult to understand.
- Plain language.
- Information not provided in plain language, confusing web pages.
- Communication barriers: no plain language.
- Some of the acronyms used aren't always known by viewers as well.

### **Text Size and Styling**

- Using bold and plain text for visual impairments - often times font may be too small to see.
- There is often an issue of font size and type.
- PDF items are often not readable by screen readers. Even though my default is set at a clear print, when I go to fill in a form, the font automatically changes to a difficult one to read.

### **Colour**

- Colour combinations that are difficult to read/may cause migraines.
- Doesn't work with dark mode which helps my migraines and post-concussion symptoms.

## **5. Communication Support Option Barriers**

- Only a phone number, no email or online portal for communication and appointments.
- Some accessibility in terms of often being required/asked to "call". This is frustrating when you know many are never expecting to have to communicate with someone who has a speech impediment - which is just another type of accent.

- I have found that some local businesses require in person visits because they don't have online sites. Conversely, often hotels are not accessible by phone but online access is not relevant to local onsite conditions.
- Lack of easy to find phone contact information when it is needed to ask specific questions.
- Online access can be difficult for those with literacy issues/older adults not familiar with internet use.
- No reply when option to send an email is selected.
- One barrier for some individuals is that they need help to read the websites; whether it's due to literacy or vision.
- Online platforms are not easy to manipulate.

## 6. Human Support Barriers

- There are times I need to be able to talk to someone. I need to articulate my question, which sometimes takes time, need help categorizing my question into the silos or categories created by automated response systems, I need to talk to a person and have them walk me through it. Finding that information is sometimes impossible as they don't offer it and even if they do it is very hard to find and usually leads to another machine.
- I hear from people that it is difficult to find the information they want online. I hear from older adults that they would prefer to talk to someone on the phone and this is becoming less accessible as businesses shift to being more online.
- Strictly online, sometimes it's hard for me to understand reading what I am doing online? It is much easier for me to understand face to face communication, where I can ask a person to explain something if I do not understand.

## 7. Physical Barriers

- Sometimes businesses don't have a delivery option, which means you must pick up in store. I have found it hard to do that as I use a walker or wheelchair.
- More in-person rules have been imposed about what services businesses offer, and how to get things. Lining up, curbside pickup, call ahead, etc. Lots of extra detail and steps to learn, remember or get help with.
- Not enough Support for people with physical disabilities. No way to go to the businesses so more mobile services should be offered. Also, cost is a factor. Too expensive for most disabled living on a tight budget.
- Awkward to give myself injections, or even prick my finger, in businesses. But mostly when I have severe sugar lows while in stores, I need to sometimes eat something before buying it. Example is a chocolate bar, and many places look at

you as if you are stealing, when in reality you're just trying not to pass out and fully intend on paying for the item.

- Too much signage since Covid! Not practical for individuals who are blind or have low vision, or who may not be at the height that signage is posted.
- Sidewalks and pathways are too narrow. People want more space!

## Impact of Barriers

The second open ended optional question in the survey was, “How did the barriers impact you, or the people you support?”. 50 people provided an answer for this question. Out of the 50, 7 people said ‘not applicable’, or similar. Below is the feedback provided by the remaining 43 people.

The answers were analyzed, and then placed in one of these six categories:

1. General Impact
2. Health and Mental Health Impact
3. Frustration, Anxiety, and Time Consuming Impact
4. Frustration and Business Impact
5. Being Left Out, Left Behind or Excluded Impact
6. Reliance on Others and Independence Impact

Most of these respondents noted that barriers could be frustrating, increase anxiety, bring potential costs, and be time consuming. Many felt that barriers could also lead to a loss of independence, increased reliance on others, and feeling of being left out, left behind, and excluded from society.

Respondents noted that barriers impact a person’s mental health, and their sense of belonging and well-being. At least three respondents noted that their actual health was impacted by barriers. Plus, some clearly noted that they would go elsewhere for goods and services, if frustrations, and time consuming efforts to get information, or buy products or services, were present.

Overall, respondents made it very clear that barriers must be taken seriously, and removed as soon as possible. It was also clear in the responses that human support was crucial, when barriers blocked access.

Note that some responses could go under more than one category, and were edited only for obvious typos, missing commas and words, and misspelling.

## 1. General Impact

- Be able to access information or resources at all or as easily.
- Couldn't get access to the service.
- Information is therefore not accessible.
- Making purchases and difficult to navigate.
- Visually/Cognitively difficulties to navigate at times.
- Cost of updating the systems and website for and social media post.
- Some individuals have difficulty navigating websites and filling out and sending PDFs.
- Less likely to disclose.
- Meeting program requirements.
- Plain language works best.

## 2. Health and Mental Health Impact

- Deep frustration, makes depression worse, means I give up and just don't get to do or use the service. Excluded from things I would like to do but simply can't get the level of information help I need.
- I broke my wrist trying to get into a store I ordered from that had a pick up only option, nobody offered to help open the door while I got my walker inside.
- Increased/exacerbated migraine/concussion symptoms since unable to use dark mode or a screen reader.
- It impacts me as I can't always afford what I need for services. My mental health also doesn't help as it's not a 'seen' disability. My doctor won't recognize my mental health challenges. Overwhelming.
- It makes me feel like i can treat my lows (blood sugar related to diabetes) and have to suffer until I actually pay for the item. Which I do understand at some type of standard but again, sometimes it is necessary to do, to just open a product and then pay for it after I have taken care of my low blood sugar.

## 3. Frustration, Anxiety, and Time Consuming Impact

- Frustration, Lack of information, Not being able to get our message out.
- Frustrated.
- Frustrations, can't find things.
- I do the majority of online stuff on my phone. Some websites are not viewed well on a phone screen, some images won't open on my phone without downloading some extra supported program. It can be very frustrating to have to go through so many hoops to get information. Provincial government of NS has come along



way with offering online services for many things but privacy breaches seem to occur more often than they should. Apps that provide aids for any type of disability should be free. They can be subsidized by the government very easily. No one should have to pay for apps that provide better accessibility with regards to technology. Cost needs to not be a barrier.

- It is a struggle.
- Emotionally and mentally it causes more to overcome.
- It a delay to get things done and need to try multiple time and or need to get help to finish.
- It makes it more difficult to find information. It means I can't always use the apps as intended or I need to switch between assistive technology or devices to access what I need. I need to call or email to get more information.

#### **4. Frustration and Business Impact**

- I just don't follow through with accessing the service or digital content because it is too frustrating or difficult. I choose another service or source of information that is accessible if there is another option.
- I buy goods from businesses with accessible websites, processes etc. That often means I have to use Amazon or look outside NS.
- Some websites I can't read so I don't support that business.
- I'm not always able to shop local, but need to use services like Amazon.
- Cannot contact the business for questions or to make appointments / change appointments. They will not have me as a client / consumer as I will seek out a business with more accessible digital infrastructure and communications.
- People had to have assistance to navigate the site. People chose not to continue on the site.
- They have no online access to business or can't use the computer if they do.
- Some individuals get frustrated and don't want to use computers to conduct business.

#### **5. Being Left Out, Left Behind or Excluded Impact**

- Mostly psychologically, a feeling of lack of inclusion and value as a human being.
- They excluded us in attending events and excluded us from community events.
- Decreasing the likelihood of learning about, and therefore participating in, opportunities, events or businesses. If access to information is strictly online without accommodation, this could defer low income persons with disability for accessing services and opportunities.
- When people won't write down or type down, so I cant understand, because I am deaf or they won't let me have a ASL interpreter.

- We can't get what we need, or if it's deemed medical the price is not in our budget.

## **6. Reliance on Others and Independence Impact**

- I often have to degrade my independence by asking someone to assist me with making calls. I should not have to do so.
- It made it difficult, so I wasn't able to do it independently. That made me very anxious and frustrated.
- Limit independence, they require someone to help navigate a web page for them.
- People either need more assistance, and there aren't necessarily people for that role, or more people may prefer to stay home, leading to isolation.
- It is more difficult to provide the same access to information and/or services to the folks who do not have access to computers. However, I've been able to help caregivers navigate this barrier by having them write down information. I check in with them again over the phone to see how they made out with the information and I have provided them with more resources during those follow-up phone calls.
- Staff support me with online.
- I spend time making info accessible to blind advisory committee member, but have been able to update municipal practices.
- It was a long process to get my grandmother comfortable online. Not only does she have little experience with computers and internet, but she is often also unable to see what is on her screen, and cannot hear things playing on her phone. Apps and attachments are always very small and hard to click and she may not know how if something is safe to download or not.

## **What Is Being Done Well**

The third open ended optional question in the survey was, "What was done well by Nova Scotia businesses online? How did that help you, or the people you support?". Out of 79 respondents, 40 answered the question. Out of the 40, 8 declined to submit a response (example: nothing). The feedback below, comes from the 32 people who provided a response.

The answers were analyzed, and then placed in one of these five categories:

1. General Done Well
2. Website, Video, and Social Media Accessibility Done Well
3. 'Human' Support and Contact Options Done Well

4. Awareness Done Well
5. Information and Communication Options Done Well

Note that some responses could go under more than one category. As well, responses may have been edited only for obvious typos, missing commas and words, and misspelling.

Some respondents noted improvements in, and increased awareness of, website, video, and social media accessibility. Some business websites provided:

- Video captioning and use of audio
- Described images
- Good colour contrast
- No flashing pop ups
- Easy to read flexible sized text
- Consistent layout and design on mobile devices
- Navigation that was easy to use
- Use of French in text content

Some respondents noted that when accessibility information is clearly noted, and digital materials, such as websites, are made more accessible, it provides better access to goods and services.

Many respondents noted that having the flexibility of using different contact options, including chat and TTY, were crucial to their successful interactions with businesses. As well, they noted that 'human' support was also vital, using phone, chat, in person, email, messaging, or other communication methods.

Overall, respondents were happy when a business had an online option. They also related that presenting information in diverse ways was very important for access. It was clear that people with disabilities would come back to a business, if the digital realm was made more accessible, and informed human support was provided

## **1. General Done Well**

- Readily available online, ease of finding NS Business sites by way of Google search engine.
- Put online, [so I can] read at home.
- Put stuff online.
- Online shopping and being part of a café.

- Alignable is a great asset.
- Society of deaf and hard of hearing Nova Scotia help me lots with accessibility, and a local social enterprise help me with my medical condition.

## **2. Website, Video, and Social Media Accessibility Done Well**

- Some businesses have changed their font to be more visually friendly and some sites have built in readers.
- Captioning for visually impaired. Feeling included & valued in mainstream society.
- Some [videos] were closed captioned.
- The platforms allowed audio.
- Some websites are screen reader friendly. Some use alt text in the comments for Instagram.
- Adding descriptions to social media posts to allow me to access information shared in images is very helpful.
- When images or description of business physical location (or parking) are included to understand whether they are a disability confident business for PWD [persons with disabilities] to navigate the location.
- Good organization, good use of contrast (e.g. not using red font), no flashing popups.
- Accessibility features pop up allowed people to choose helpful features. Well organized, easy to follow links. Limited use of graphics and video, pages not "busy" and distracting.
- My grandmother does have a good grasp on social media and appreciates when businesses use Facebook to post easy to read flyer, etc..
- Websites that are accessible to me get my business. Those that aren't lose money to those that are.
- They look nice and they are trying to put more are more information out there. They are making their sites accessible for mobile devices too.
- I appreciate that more and more people are thinking about accessibility online and including things like photo descriptions and French text in social media posts.

## **3. 'Human' Support and Contact Options Done Well**

- Online chats options (with real humans, not bots) are very helpful.
- Some places offer a chat with us option that was easy to use.
- I found that there were many resources and phone numbers you could call for support.

- Providing an easy way to contact the business/organization if I need to (not making it seem like they don't want to hear from me by putting a phone number at the bottom of a page or no phone number at all).
- Flexibility in how I interact with them.
- When businesses provide options for contact such as call, text, in-person, social media messaging, TTY, this increases accessibility for all.
- A few employees knew what we were looking for.
- They seemed willing to pivot to online services, take-out, etc., but in many cases that seemed to be to save themselves, rather than to serve their clientele in the best way(s).
- Confidential email support, ability to change and make bookings. Easy-to-navigate communication portals via business websites. Willingness to use email as a primary communication system rather than phone (e.g. emails checked often, staff responds in a timely manner).

#### **4. Awareness Done Well**

- What is done well is that there's more visibility now for mental health. It's a slow start but it's a start.
- Listing accessibility options directly with the other information is great so I know they have at least considered my experience. That makes me think they would be open to hearing other questions I might have or helping if I need it.
- Some local businesses have made a concerted effort to improve their website so that is a step in the right direction.
- Some corporate owned businesses have made their sites much more user friendly which made me happy.

#### **5. Information and Communications Done Well**

- Online payment/shopping is wonderful! Business that offer this feature have really helped many people with disabilities.
- Offering alternate ways to accessing services or information.
- The option to renew vehicle plates online saved me a trip to Access NS. As you know the price of gas has gone up dramatically and I don't do well with crowds due to the PTSD. Being able to access more services like this helps a lot with decreasing my anxiety and helps me keep within my tight budget since I'm on a fixed income.
- Being able to see what people are up to as well as upcoming events
- Open communication, clearly identified, safe and welcoming space.

## Final Input

The fourth, and last, open ended optional question in the survey was, “Anything else you want to share about getting information, or buying things, online with businesses in Nova Scotia?”. Out of 79 respondents, 34 answered the question. 11 of those 34 answered that they had nothing to share. Below is the feedback from the 23 people who did share final input.

The answers were analyzed, and then placed in one of five categories:

1. General Awareness Final Input
2. Awareness Final Input
3. Website, Video, and Social Media Accessibility Final Input
4. Accessibility is Important Final Input
5. Disability Final Input

Note that some responses could go under more than one category, and some were edited only for obvious typos, missing commas and words, and misspelling.

As in the other open ended question areas, digital accessibility was noted as being very important for businesses in Nova Scotia. Overall, the more awareness of disability and accessibility in the digital and physical realm a business had, the more people with disabilities would want to access that business. Respondents also wanted businesses to increase their knowledge about digital accessibility, so that they could get information, and purchase goods and services.

### 1. General Awareness Final Input

- The more accessible a business is, the better.
- Having more options at local businesses.
- Let’s just keep improving things.
- Make it inclusive for all.
- Buying things online can be very scary to a lot of older adults. Making things feel more secure and safe online would help.
- Use many forms of marketing to promote inclusion of all Nova Scotians.
- I think it is essential that businesses be encouraged to apply for grants from government that could help them move more quickly and effectively to an Accessible Nova Scotia.
- Training opportunities and options how best to move forward and of course support.

- Queens association support living and deaf youth association and society deaf and hard of hearing Nova Scotia.

## **2. Awareness Final Input**

- Businesses need to be educated about the detrimental psychological impact ableism creates.
- More employees need to know more about people in their communities so they can better understand about disabled persons.

## **3. Website, Video, and Social Media Accessibility Final Input**

- Have less information, only have what is necessary, and make that information bigger [font size].
- I think keeping things simple, clear and uncluttered is helpful.
- We appreciate pages that are easy to look at and have clear link that make sense.
- We like pages that work with any browser, or that clearly indicate which browsers work best with the page.
- Consider the colour contrast of font, the design of the page, the ease of use. Many websites are not easy to use.
- Hopefully always a phone number or direct contact at TOP of page as an alternative to get info.
- Sometimes websites are hard to navigate when you have a disability, I suggest to look at it with an accessibility lens.
- I wish every business understood the importance of designing their interfaces to be screen reader friendly. It makes a huge difference to how and whether I interact with their content and ultimately whether I buy anything from them.
- Clearly provide details on pick-up options.

## **4. Accessibility is Important Final Input**

- I am thankful for services that will deliver to me. Or come to me. With mental health issues, it's easier than having to take a risk and go out some days.
- Many businesses such as landscaping and construction businesses which is done on the go (e.g. in vehicles) do not have sufficient knowledge and training to have the necessary digital support for accessible communication. (e.g. texting instead of phone, apps which make typing easier, etc).

## **5. Final Disability Input**

- Email transfers should be accepted anywhere and especially with the provincial governments. All apps related to technology aids for anyone with disabilities should be free even if the government has to subsidize the cost. Vehicle plates for individuals with disabilities should be free as well. Cost should never be a barrier for anyone. Parking permits with the handicap sign need to be updated and better language needs to be used. They should be free as well.
- Getting resources like crutches and wheelchairs is not possible online in my community. It requires a drive of about 1.5 hours, when an online booking and delivery service would be easier for families. Same with CNIB resources, which seem to require an in person assessment in CBRM.
- I have diabetes and arthritis everywhere, I find it hard to pay for my diabetes things everything is so expensive.

## Gift Draw

Out of 79 survey respondents, 64.29% of respondents chose to apply for the gift card draw, while 35.71% declined to be part of the draw. Of those who applied, 7 gave invalid emails. However, the 29 people who had valid email addresses were sent e-gift cards from Tim Hortons.

The exact breakdown is:

- 36 people chose to apply for the gift card.
- 20 people chose not to apply for the gift card.
- 23 Skipped this question

## Appendix A: About Access Changes Everything Inc.

Lisa Snider is the Senior Digital Accessibility Consultant and Trainer in her company, Access Changes Everything Inc. (ACE). For over 24 years, Lisa's passion in life has been making the digital world more accessible for people with disabilities. She has done this work in different North American settings and contexts, as a web developer, archivist, librarian, and since 2016, as a senior accessibility consultant.

Lisa shares her knowledge with clients through digital accessibility training, courses, presentations, auditing with people with disabilities, remediation, creating plans, policies, and procedures, procurement consulting, and facilitation. Lisa has provided these services to a wide variety of North American organizations, governments, and



businesses, such as the Government of Nova Scotia, Canadian Museum for Human Rights, NovaNet, Acadia University, etc.

Lisa specializes in digital accessibility, which includes: websites, documents, audio, video, email, electronic signage, social media, apps, EPUB eBooks, etc. She is a nationally recognized digital accessibility advocate and specialist, an internationally recognized archival accessibility expert, and is a person with multiple disabilities.

Lisa Snider is Chair of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act Goods and Services Standard Development Committee, and was Chair of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, Information and Communications Standard Development Committee. In 2022, she was an Associate in the Independent Nova Scotia Accessibility Act Review.

She is Vice Chair of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA), Technical Committee for the Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services Including Customer Service. She is also a member of the ACA, Accessible and Equitable Artificial Intelligence Systems Technical Committee, and a member of the ACA Technical Committee on Accessibility Requirements for Information and Communication Technology Products and Services.

Lisa was a Stakeholder in the W3C Accessibility Guidelines Working Group Silver Task Force (WCAG 2.1), and is an invited member of the Microsoft Inclusive Workplace Customer Advisory Council, collaborating with Microsoft to improve the accessibility of their products.

More information about Access Changes Everything Inc., and Lisa Snider, is available on the Access Changes Everything Inc. website, at <http://www.accesschangeseverything.com/>.

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