Te Tari Taiwhenua
Internal Affairs

# Digital inclusion user insights for disabled people

A summary of a user experience research report by the Digital Inclusion Programme, Department of Internal Affairs (September 2020).

## Thank you and disclaimer

The research team would like to extend our warmest thanks to the people who participated in this user experience research project. We would also like to note the information and findings featured in this report reflect the views of the individuals who were interviewed and the various groups that represent them.

## Foreword

We are living in a rapidly changing digital world. In the last 10 years alone, smartphones have gone from a curiosity owned by a few to a commodity used by over 2 billion people worldwide.

B the mid-2030s, it has been estimated that 24 percent of today's jobs in New Zealand could be automated (PwC, 2018) and a new range of jobs that we can only imagine will have emerged.

As digital technologies weave their way into our lives, they impact society and the way we do things. It is therefore vital that everyone can participate fully in, and make the most of, our increasingly digital world. This is digital inclusion.

When digital inclusion is discussed in research papers such as the [Motu Economic and Public Policy Research's Digital Inclusion and Wellbeing in New Zealand](#), the following people are often identified as being most at risk of digital exclusion:

- disabled people
- Māori
- Pacific peoples
- people in social housing
- seniors
- un- and underemployed people
- people living in remote communities.

Most research identifies the demographic groups that are considered most at risk of not being digitally included. However, it does not explore the personal experience of the individuals within these groups.

This research was undertaken to understand the perceptions and feelings about digital inclusion from the perspective of disabled people. This report documents the key pain points for individuals, what they like about the current online environment and what improvements could be made to ensure a more equitable digital environment for their representative group.

# Definitions and framework

This research drew on the vision of digital inclusion set out in the Digital Inclusion Blueprint, Te Mahere mō te Whakaurunga Matihiko ([the Blueprint](#)) and the Blueprint's definition of the 4 elements of digital inclusion: Trust, Motivation, Access and Skills.

# Scope and method

## Participants

### Individuals

In total, 27 people participated in research interviews, including 6 disability sector representatives and 21 people who either had a disability or who were the primary carer of a person with a disability.

### Organisations

Organisations included in this research were the Ministry of Health, 20/20 Trust, Access Advisors, Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand, Deaf Aotearoa and a range of community leaders.

### Disabilities

People who took part or who were represented in the research had a range of disabilities, including low vision or blindness, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, autism, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), intellectual disabilities, Down's syndrome, deafness and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

## Data collection

Data was collected during face-to-face, phone, video, and paper-based (for non-verbal participants) interviews.

Interviews took roughly 30 to 60 minutes.

## Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed into summary notes, with data categorised and themed.

## Limitations

COVID-19 limited the ability to travel and meet individuals in person, minimising face-to-face interviews. It also limited access to individuals who were not able to use video conference tools, email or a telephone.

In addition, the research had limited engagement with various ethnic demographic groups with disabilities. For example, few participants identified as Māori, Pasifika or Asian or as people aged 25 years or younger.

# Discussion

"The baseline levels of digital knowledge, access and skills are getting higher and higher as time goes on and the people who are already left behind will get further left behind." – Interviewee who has cerebral palsy

## Insights

- Web accessibility is still generally poor.
- There is a lack of accessibility which is demotivating for individuals.

- Digital skills are not widespread within the community.
- Trust is a barrier to carrying out online tasks.
- The New Zealand Web Accessibility Standard needs to be enforced.
- There is general inaccessibility of content, navigation and website design.
- Cost and education are barriers to accessing technology.
- People frequently rely on other people for social and accessibility purposes.
- Improved accessibility and support is needed in the workplace.

"We need a culture of acceptance. We need everyone to embrace accessibility and to see it as important as online security. People need to understand that anything else is exclusion." – Accessibility Consultant

## Key findings

### 1. Enforce or incentivise the Web Accessibility Standard

Interviewees believe New Zealand's Web Accessibility Standard is largely ineffective without strong incentives or enforcement.

The interviewees strongly recommend that government organisations explore incentive or enforcement measures to ensure the Standard is met.

## 2. Increase co-design for accessible digital services

Interviewees believe digital services and information should be made accessible by default.

The research indicates that this could be achieved by ensuring service and content designers use co-design and human-centred design approaches.

Government organisations could also include representation from disabled people when they design services and content.

## 3. Offer more digital skills training to the disability community

The research identified that disabled people's digital skills, knowledge and understanding needs to be developed to ensure they know how to use accessibility tools.

## 4. Provide affordable access to digital tools and technology

The research identified that disabled people need better access to devices, software, tools and support to engage digitally, particularly in the early stages of their lives.

## 5. Explore employment and post-employment support

The research identified that workplace programmes need to support the inclusion of disabled and neuro-diverse people.

# Next steps

The findings in this report can be used by people in government and non-government organisations to drive change for a more digitally inclusive culture.