Inclusion & Accessibility Labs

Irish Digital Accessibility Index

2023

for National Council for the Blind

NCBI

Introduction from the Chief Executive Officer of NCBI

Last year, NCBI commissioned the first ever Irish Digital Accessibility Index, a ground-breaking report about the adoption of digital accessibility in Ireland. 2023 marks the second edition of this report, which shows the progress we have made in that short period of time.

Figure 1: Chris White, NCBI Chief Executive Officer

The private sector remains much the same since last year: 27% of the Irish Times top 100 companies have taken steps towards making their websites accessible, compared to 28% of last year's top 100 companies doing the same.

Accessibility plays an important role in fostering a truly inclusive world. Just as we prioritise accessibility in physical spaces, we must also prioritise it online, especially as we grow more reliant on the internet every day. While people with disabilities are promised equal access to employment, education, healthcare, e-commerce, and digital leisure and entertainment, the individual websites who offer these services often fail to fully facilitate this access.

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NCBI believe that a better world, both online and offline, is one where people of all abilities can participate and access resources independently. Digital accessibility is key to creating such a world, and given Ireland's position as a hub for global IT companies, we should lead the charge in implementing and promoting digital accessibility initiatives.

Why is digital accessibility important?

In Ireland, one in five people live with some type of disability. This number amounts to over one million individuals according to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) [1]. As the population ages, this number is expected to increase even further.

If we don't make a focused effort to improve digital accessibility, we risk excluding one million people from engaging in everyday activities. Simple tasks like participating in online classes, staying connected with loved ones through social media, and accessing vital information about health or finances become challenging – or outright impossible.
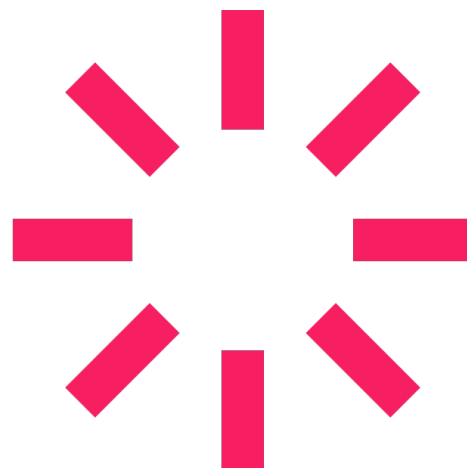
In short, digital accessibility is crucial because many people heavily rely on the internet for essential everyday activities. Ensuring your website is accessible would make an incredible difference to their lives.

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What does the legislation say?

The European Union (EU) Web Accessibility Directive (Directive [EU] 2016/2102), ratified in Ireland as the EU (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations (S.I. No. 358/2020), has been in force since December 2016. It states that websites and applications of public sector bodies must comply with WCAG 2.1 level AA, and requires the following:

- An accessibility statement for every website and mobile application.

- A feedback mechanism to allow users to report accessibility problems or request published information in an accessible format.

- Regular monitoring of public sector websites and applications by EU Member States and reports on the results.

In 2019, the European Accessibility Act (Directive [EU] 2019/882) (EAA) was adopted with the aim of introducing harmonised accessibility rules for private sector products and services in the EU. As of July 2022, three member states – Estonia, Italy, and Denmark – have transposed the EAA into national law [2], with the remaining 24 still yet to do so. Only two years remain until the EAA's June 2025 deadline, from when companies must make the necessary changes to their accessibility or face legal measures.

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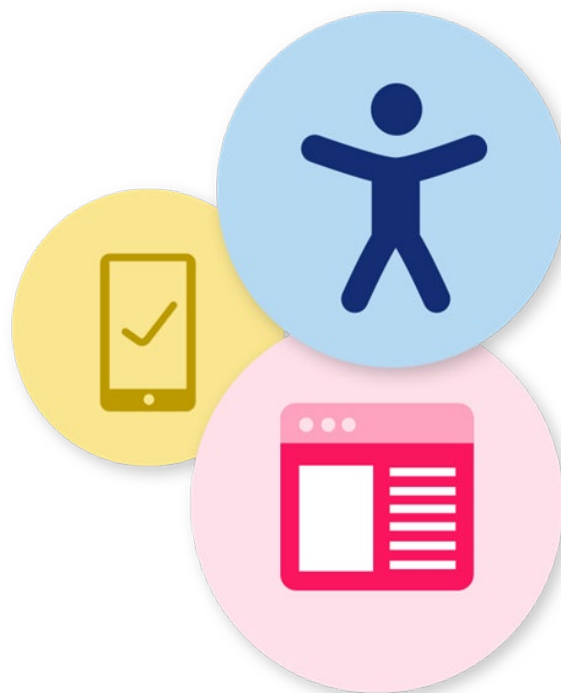
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Where does digital accessibility show up?

Digital accessibility means making sure that a website, app, or any digital experience can be used by all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

For example, if a person cannot access content on a web page because they cannot use a mouse to interact with links, that page would be considered inaccessible. However, if the same web page offered another way to interact with links such as through keyboard commands, it becomes more accessible.

It's easy to think of digital accessibility as something that exists just on websites and mobile apps. In reality, it appears everywhere. Moreover, digital accessibility doesn't solely benefit people with disabilities; it helps everyone. For example, if you have ever increased the text size on your phone for easier reading, you've experienced the advantages of digital accessibility.

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Users have diverse needs and preferences when using digital products. Accessibility exists on a spectrum and there is no one-size-fits-all definition. Nonetheless, web developers follow established best practices that are regularly updated to ensure content is inclusive of as many people as possible.

Regardless of the digital platform, accessibility should always be a part of the equation.

NCBI and Inclusion and Accessibility Labs will review the progress Ireland is making on its journey towards full digital equality and will continue to publish the Digital Accessibility Index annually.

Chris White

Group Chief Executive Officer

National Council for the Blind of Ireland

Introduction to IA Labs

IA Labs was established in 2021 with the aim of pushing equal digital inclusion and accessibility all across Ireland.

Developed under the umbrella of NCBI, the staff of IA Labs hold training and experience in the various ways that the internet has failed to consider people with disabilities, along with the ways it can improve.

IA Labs specialise in auditing websites, mobile applications, and digital documents against the WCAG. They provide useful feedback to clients about how to fix issues. An audit completed by IA Labs is guarantee that a website or an app is an inclusive space for everyone and can be used regardless of a user's abilities.

IA Labs have achieved multiple awards in recognition of what they do. Most recently, they won the Vision X Pitch Competition at Dublin Tech Summit 2023, the biggest and fastest growing technology event in Dublin sponsored by AIB, HubSpot for Start-ups, and Enterprise Ireland. Their pitch focused on their plan to secure funding that will automate their manual accessibility audit process and expand their reach internationally. The IA Labs marketing team have also been awarded a Think Global Award in recognition of their hard work online and offline.

IA Labs believe wholeheartedly in giving people equal opportunity to make the most of the digital world and all the services it provides. With this report, they hope to highlight how important it is for Ireland to continue to strive towards full digital accessibility.

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The IA Labs Team

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Abstract

The purpose of this document is to showcase how accessible or inaccessible the technological world is for people with disabilities in Ireland. It has five sections: the accessibility of (i) political party websites, their Teachtaí Dála (TDs') and their Senators' pages, (ii) Ireland's top 100 companies in 2023 according to The Irish Times, (iii) education, (iv) hospitals, and (v) housing.

The websites have been tested for their compatibility with JAWS and NVDA screen readers and with TalkBack and VoiceOver for any mobile applications. They have been tested against the WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

The websites included in this report have also been tested against the Google Lighthouse automated accessibility auditing tool. This tool has been compared to manual IA Labs testing to discern whether it can find as many issues as an expert accessibility tester.

This report has been designed according to NCBI's clear print guidelines.

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Assumptions

It has been assumed that the people using the above-mentioned websites have received basic training in screen readers and assistive technologies.

For the websites in this report, only a section of each website was tested since this was deemed sufficient in determining whether a website was accessible or not. The section tested always included the navigation pane, header, home page, and footer in order to adhere to a standard testing procedure across the websites and allow a fair comparison to be drawn with Google Lighthouse.

Each website in this report has been allocated a pass or fail mark based on how accessible it is. The passing criterion was that a user with a disability should be able to access every part of the section tested and know what element the section focuses on. In this scenario, a 'pass' does not mean that a website is perfectly accessible, but that it is usable. If a website failed, it did so on two bases. It was either completely inaccessible to someone using a keyboard or a lack of contextual labelling made it impossible for a user to interact with the elements on the website.

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Executive Summary

This report brings into focus the daily challenges faced by individuals with disabilities when accessing technology like websites, apps, and digital platforms. Technology has revolutionised our lives, granting us the ability to work, shop, bank, study, find housing, connect with friends, and manage our healthcare, all from the convenience of our own homes.

Regrettably, a significant portion – over one million people, or one in five – of the Irish population encounters difficulties in tasks such as working, shopping, or banking online [1]. This is due to the prevalent non-compliance of many websites, apps, and technologies with well-defined EU accessibility standards.

Since its establishment in 2021, IA Labs has been actively engaged in Ireland's digital accessibility sector, tirelessly aiding both public and private sector entities in their journeys to full digital equality. This report assesses digital accessibility across multiple sectors, encompassing Ireland's political landscape, leading companies, hospitals, housing associations, and educational institutions. It evaluates sectors individually by assigning passes or failures based on a comprehensive accessibility review, thereby pinpointing areas that require improvement. Furthermore, the report identifies websites with up-to-date accessibility statements.

In tandem with acknowledging progress, this report sheds light on shortcomings in the accessibility of Ireland's public sector. Those with

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disabilities are unable to study, book transportation, manage finances, or schedule medical appointments due to the lack of digital accessibility on the websites and apps they rely on.

IA Labs has cultivated expertise in assessing digital accessibility, with the aim to assist and guide organisations who are dedicated to fostering inclusivity and equality. Their insights prove to be invaluable for organisations who offer digital platforms.

Even minor modifications to websites, apps, and digital experiences can make a monumental impact for users with disabilities. As a leading figure in the global technology arena, Ireland has both the responsibility and opportunity to set a precedent in ensuring digital equality for all. By raising awareness of the status of digital accessibility in the public sector, we make further progress in our endeavour to guarantee that every individual with disabilities has equal access and opportunities, mirroring the advantages that technology offers to society as a whole.

Key Findings

This report underscores notable advancements made by public sector websites, particularly on Dáil Éireann's political party platforms. It's encouraging to see three of our political party websites successfully passing IA Labs' digital accessibility reviews. However, while this does show an improvement from last year, it's concerning that five out of eight political parties still maintain websites that are not digitally accessible.

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On a positive note, the private sector is gradually recognising the significance of digital accessibility, with a 27% increase in accessibility observed among the most prominent companies. Nonetheless, there is ample room for improvement within the private sector. The technology and communications industry stands out with the highest percentage of digital accessibility. Conversely, the retail, construction, and property sectors show the lowest levels of accessibility.

Turning to other sectors, this report sheds light on a disheartening lack of digital accessibility on our education, housing, and healthcare websites. IA Labs assessed 39 websites spanning Ireland's leading universities as well as both public and private secondary schools; among 19 universities, only four successfully met digital accessibility standards. Unfortunately, all other public and private secondary schools fell short in this regard.

Within our healthcare landscape, the situation remains similarly poor. A mere three out of 20 public and private healthcare websites were found to pass IA Labs' accessibility review. This emphasises a compelling need for comprehensive improvements in this critical sector.

The Real Impact of Digital Discrimination

The accessibility of the websites mentioned in this report were also tested by a person who has a disability. Their response to the findings in this report can be read below:

I primarily use JAWS and occasionally use NVDA. These two screen-readers update very regularly to keep up with this ever-changing environment. JAWS was used by 53.7% and NVDA was used by 30.7% of visually impaired screen-reader users in 2021. Accessibility is essential for all screen-reader users. It is necessary that the website must be well laid out and function properly, so that navigating through it is a simple task and not in any way daunting.

E-commerce Websites

The majority of my shopping is now done online, as it is much easier and should be more accessible than going to the store. A website that is lacking in accessibility is lowering its number of potential customers. There is nothing that makes you move on to another site more than if you cannot perform the basics. It is easy to move on when you know there are many rival websites that provide very similar services with a lot less hassle. An example of this is online grocery shopping. The Tesco website is very easy to use for all and that is a contributing factor to its growth in becoming one of the most popular supermarkets in Ireland.

There are a few basic things that may cause me to close the tab on my internet browser and move on to a different site:

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1. Does the site have headings? It is very time consuming, if not impossible to browse the page by using the tab and arrows only. You may come to a section that does not interest you, so you press H (for heading) and be moved on to the next section. The non-existent heading means that you cannot do this. You must spend time arrowing down, or the easier option is to move onto another similar site. An example of where This is the case is on the Aldi website.

2. Are the images labelled? An unlabelled image does not exist for a visually impaired person. They can go down through each of the images one by one by hitting G on the keyboard. An example may be a picture tempting a purchase. A simple description of a few words would be enough for the browsing individual to go from "I'm going to move on to another site" to a potential purchase. More detail is necessary when online clothes shopping.

3. Are the drop-down boxes easy to use? When you get to the drop-down box can you easily open it and go through the options? Viewing different items in the list, for example a product or size, would be impossible to do if not. You should be able to open the list with space bar, or Alt and down arrow and then scroll through the options with the up and down arrows.

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4. How is the layout for navigation within the site? You may be looking for a specific service, which is only available on one of the website's pages. You cannot avail of this service if that page is unreachable. The primary navigation should always be at the top of the webpage, even when you go down several pages on the website. This allows easy browsing of the website and not being fixed on one page.

5. Are the links to other pages on the site, or to external sites labelled? The first part mentioned here relates to the above point. The latter point here would allow the individual to do some further browsing to possibly related products on the same site, or an external site.

6. Is there a labelled search box at the top of the page? When you already know what you are looking for a specific search is much better than browsing with filters, which would take much more time. Putting in the browsing criteria with filters is very effective when you are unsure what exactly you are looking for. When the search box is set to the top of the page it is much easier to access. Knowing that it is a search box and search button is only possible when it is labelled correctly. "Text Box" and "Button" do not suffice.

7. Is it easy to create a new account and log in? This is the necessary part to start the purchasing process when you are

buying a product or service from a site. Creating the profile cannot be done if the above points are not addressed.

I have reviewed about 100 Irish websites with this functionality and have found the above issues. The above points are essential here. For example, it would be impossible to go any further if you cannot do a standard search or select options from a drop-down.

The above points not being met would mean that the website would lose business on the day and permanently. The word would spread on how accessible another rival website is, resulting in the visually impaired community not even considering them when looking to avail of this good or service. It is a financial loss if a potential customer has been scared away.

Public Sector Websites

The seven points listed above, apart from the first one and last one, apply here too. The accessibility of the primary government website, gov.ie, has improved massively, but it still is missing a few things. The page of each department is very well laid out and easy to use. However, this is sometimes not the case when you browse further into the site. It is the case that a lot of websites are user-friendly when you first go onto the site. The challenge is to maintain accessibility after a while of surfing, while jumping from one page to the next. I have noticed before that some sites almost tire out.

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Another piece that limits your browsing capability and patience is constant pop-ups. You can see these on the UCC website. You maybe wanting to listen to articles or hear navigation to links etc. This is not possible when the voice-over must change its focus to those constant pop-ups. There should be an option to disable them at the top of the page that is easy to find.

There is also an issue using the drop-down boxes on some websites. This is the case on myhome.ie for example. You are told that you are selecting a drop-down menu, but it does not open and the page refreshes. There is no way a screen-reader user would know that reason and would be still waiting for the drop-down to open. This is a simple change of the function of the button. From "drop-down" to "link".

Office Addresses on websites should be written out, not just shown on Google maps. A visually impaired person will not be able to see the location when it is shown on maps. The address needs to be in writing in the same section. There is an issue with links to addresses to social media sites, as is seen in the above section, the link to the site is called "link". The person browsing does not know what internet address that link is for and will avoid it as a result.

The accessibility of public sites is essential for overall living and feeling part of the community. All public services are available by filling out forms, addresses given and contact details. This should be for all and not only those who can use the site. There have been huge

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improvements over the last few years and the final few steps need to be taken to be fully inclusive.

Political Parties, TDs, and Senators

Political Parties, TDs, and Senators

Political parties, TDs (Teachta Dála – Members of the Dáil Éireann), and Senators play crucial roles in Ireland's democratic system and governance.

Political parties play a vital role in Irish democracy by providing voters with clear choices and options during elections. Parties present their visions for the country's future, seek to gain seats in the Dáil, and influence government policies by forming coalitions or taking part in the opposition.

TDs are elected representatives in the lower house of the Irish parliament, the Dáil Éireann. They represent specific geographical constituencies and are accountable to their constituents. Their primary role is to propose, debate, and vote on legislation.

Senators are members of the upper house of the Irish parliament, the Seanad Éireann. Some are elected by specific vocational panels, representing various sectors of society, while others are nominated by the Taoiseach or elected by local government representatives. The Seanad's role includes reviewing and revising legislation proposed by the Dáil, providing expertise through its vocational panels, and offering a platform for debate on national issues.

Overall, political parties, TDs, and senators form the backbone of Ireland's democratic system, representing the diverse interests and

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viewpoints of the population, proposing and debating legislation, and contributing to the formation and functioning of the government.

This section goes through the accessibility of each Irish political party website, their accessibility policies, and the specific priorities related to disability inclusion that each of the TDs and Senators mention.

Digital Accessibility: Pass or Fail

Among the eight political parties, three earned the distinction of being deemed usable by people with disabilities. These parties were Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Sinn Féin. While certain accessibility issues remain and opportunities for improvement exist, it's encouraging to see less accessibility issues with each passing year.

This marks a positive trajectory of progress: in 2021, none of the parties passed IA Labs' accessibility review, whereas in 2022, three parties achieved a pass, underscoring a collective dedication to improving their digital accessibility.

Fianna Fáil

Fianna Fáil's website underwent testing by IA Labs, revealing a total of 22 accessibility issues. These included problems with low colour contrast, unlabelled form elements, and missing alt text for images. Despite these issues, it is important to note that the website remains usable by

Figure 2: Fianna Fáil Logo

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individuals with disabilities, and it has successfully obtained a pass mark in the accessibility evaluation.

Fine Gael

IA Labs' comprehensive evaluation of Fine Gael's website uncovered a total of 19 accessibility issues that warrant attention. These encompassed non-descriptive and repetitive link labels, alongside challenges arising when the webpage was viewed at 200% zoom level. Nonetheless, the website remains functional and has successfully passed a digital accessibility review.

Figure 3: Fine Gael Logo

Sinn Féin

The review of Sinn Féin's website homepage showed discrepancies in the heading structure and accessibility issues related to keyboard focus. Despite these highlighted issues, Sinn Féin's website has earned a passing evaluation due to its usability. This is the first year that Sinn Féin has passed an accessibility review, which is a clear indicator that they are beginning to take strides to make their web content digitally accessible.

Figure 4: Sinn Féin Logo

Labour Party

A total of 14 accessibility issues were found on the Labour Party's website homepage. Among these, the inability to access the navigation menu through keyboard interaction or screen readers was the most critical concern. Given the gravity of this issue, it has resulted in a failure.

Figure 5: Labour Logo

Green Party

Mirroring the Labour Party, significant accessibility challenges were identified on the Green Party website's homepage where some sections were inaccessible via keyboard or screen reader navigation. Owing to the critical nature of this concern, the Labour Party also failed the digital accessibility review.

Figure 6: Green Party Logo

Social Democrats

On the Social Democrats' homepage, a comprehensive accessibility analysis revealed a total of 25 issues. These included an inaccessible cookie pop-up, the presence of non-unique and non-descriptive links, and low colour contrast. Given the substantial impact of these identified issues, the website has failed the assessment.

Figure 7: Social Democrats Logo

People Before Profit

On this particular homepage, IA Labs' digital accessibility review revealed a total of 18 issues. Among these were issues surrounding inaccessible videos, text with insufficient colour contrast, and the presence of non-unique or inadequately descriptive links: this has resulted in a failure in the assessment. This is an example of why accessibility is an on-going project that cannot be forgotten, since People Before Profit had been given a pass mark in last year's report.

Figure 8: People Before Profit Logo

Aontú

Upon subjecting Aontú's website homepage to examination, 25 accessibility issues were found. Notably, specific sections of the website were not responsive keyboard and screen reader interactions and images lacked descriptive alt text descriptions. In light of these substantial issues, Aontú's website has failed the accessibility review.

Figure 9: Aontú Logo

Accessibility Statements

Accessibility statements are imperative for public sector organisations in the EU to fulfil legal obligations, promote transparency, and enhance inclusivity in digital services. The EU Web Accessibility Directive mandates that all public sector websites and mobile applications meet standards at WCAG 2.1 level AA [3].

Of the eight political parties mentioned in this report, all eight had an accessibility statement on their website, but none were formatted correctly or mentioned the correct digital accessibility standard.

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Accessibility Policies

An encouraging consensus emerges among the eight political parties: seven of them explicitly address people with disabilities in their policy frameworks and fiscal strategies.

last year's report, merely half of the parties made discernible references to disability inclusion within their agendas; this year's commendable increase mirrors the positive trajectory witnessed in the digital accessibility of the public sector overall.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael

Within the 2020 Programme for Government, the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael coalition's commitment is extended towards disability support. This commitment encompasses a multifaceted approach, with a focus on heightening awareness, bolstering employment assistance, enhancing provisions for residential and respite care, and augmenting day services for individuals with disabilities.

Sinn Féin

In 2022, Sinn Féin demonstrated its dedication to disability support through the publication of an Alternative Budget. Within this budgetary framework, a dedicated section was devoted to addressing disability-related concerns. In this document, Sinn Féin underscored the imperative of augmented funding for crucial disability services, spanning early intervention, respite care, support and adaptation grants, the

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enhancement of accessible public transport, and the elevation of disability allowances.

Labour Party

Embedded within their Alternative Budget for 2023, the Labour Party reaffirms their resolute dedication to fostering an inclusive society that accommodates individuals with disabilities. This commitment manifests through a comprehensive strategy encompassing amplified financial support, bolstered allocations for education and healthcare services, as well as advancements in accessible transportation provisions.

Green Party

The Green Party does not mention any specific policies related to accessibility support, however, their housing policy does mention the need for accessible housing for elderly and people with disabilities.

Social Democrats

The Social Democrats have outlined a disability policy, underscoring their primary goal of complete ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities protocol within Ireland. Within this policy framework, the party also advocates for universal design and advancements in crucial aspects such as housing, transportation, healthcare access, employment, and education, all aimed at fostering an inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities.

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People Before Profit

Within their policy framework, People Before Profit have a dedicated disability policy that underscores their commitment to various vital facets. This includes advocating for robust support for care centres, the facilitation of accessible housing solutions, and advocating for augmented funding directed towards disability services and the disability allowance.

Aontú

Regrettably, Aontú's website does not feature any explicit mention of accessibility policies.

TDs and Senators

The specific policies and priorities of each TD and Senator across Ireland were investigated to determine whether or not they mention people with disabilities.

All eight political parties have TDs in parliament. Of the 160 TDs, only 55 explicitly mention people with disabilities in their agendas.

There are 60 Senators in the Seanad, all of which are either independent or are part of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Sinn Féin, Green Party, or Labour Party. Of those 60 Senators, only 15 mention people with disabilities.

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Fianna Fáil

Fianna Fáil has a contingent of 37 TDs occupying seats, of which seven have a specific emphasis on disability inclusion: Anne Rabbitte, Cormac Devlin, Mary Butler, Michael Moynihan, Norma Foley, Padraig O'Sullivan, and Stephen Donnelly.

Figure 10: Fianna Fáil Logo

Among the 21 Fianna Fáil Senators, two distinguished members – Erin McGreehan and Fiona O'Loughlin – underscore disability inclusion as a priority.

Fine Gael

Fine Gael has a contingent of 34 TDs occupying seats, of which 15 have a specific emphasis on disability inclusion: Colm Burke, Joe Carey, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, Bernard Durkan, Alan Farrell, Simon Harris, Josepha Madigan, Helen McEntee, Joe McHugh, Kieran O'Donnell, Fergus O'Dowd, Neale Richmond, Michael Ring, David Stanton, and Leo Varadkar.

Figure 11: Fine Gael Logo

Among the 16 Fine Gael Senators, eight distinguished members – Jerry Buttimer, Maria Byrne, Micheal Carrigy, Martin Conway, Emer Currie, Sean Kyne, Tim Lombard, and Mary Seery-Kearney – underscore disability inclusion as a priority.

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Sinn Féin

Sinn Féin has a contingent of 36 TDs occupying seats, of which 21 have a specific emphasis on disability inclusion: Chris Andrews, Matt Carthy, Sorca Clarke, Rose Conway Walsh, Sean Crowe, David Cullinane, Pa Daly, Pearse Doherty, Kathleen Funchion, Thomas Gould, Martin Kenny, Claire Kerrane, Mary Lou MacDonald, Imelda Munster, Darren O'Rourke, Patricia Ryan, Pauline Tully, Mark Ward, Donnclagh O'Laoghaire, Ruairi O'Murchu, and Aengus O'Snodaigh.
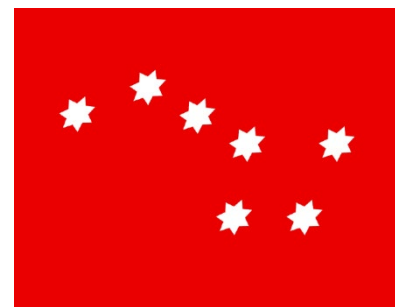

Figure 12: Sinn Féin Logo

Among the 4 Sinn Féin Senators, none mention disability inclusion as a priority.

Labour Party

The Labour Party has a contingent of seven TDs occupying seats, of which two have a specific emphasis on disability inclusion: Duncan Smith and Ivana Bacik.

Among the four Labour Party Senators, only Ivana Bacik underscores disability inclusion as a priority.

Figure 13: Labour Party Logo

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Green Party

The Green Party has a contingent of 12 TDs occupying seats, of which four exhibit a specific emphasis on disability inclusion: Roderic O'Gorman, Patrick Costello, Neasa Hourigan, and Steven Matthews.

Among the four Green Party Senators, none mention disability inclusion as a priority.

Figure 14: Green Party Logo

Social Democrats

The Social Democrats have a contingent of six TDs occupying seats, of which one, Holly Cairns, has a specific emphasis on disability inclusion.

Figure 15: Social Democrats Logo

No Senators are part of the Social Democrats.

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People Before Profit

People Before Profit have a contingent of five TDs occupying seats, of which one, Gino Kenny, has a specific emphasis on disability inclusion.

No Senators are part of People Before Profit.

Figure 16: People Before Profit Logo

Aontú

Aontú have one TD occupying a seat and he does not exhibit a specific emphasis on disability inclusion.

No Senators are part of Aontú.

Figure 17: Aontú Logo

Independents

There are 22 Independent TDs occupying seats in the Dáil, of which four have a specific emphasis on disability inclusion: Sean Canney, Michael Fitzmaurice, Michael Lowry, and Thomas Pringle.

Among the 11 Independent Senators, four distinguished members – Tom Clonan, Alice-Mary Higgins, Sharon Keogan, and Lynn Ruane – underscore disability inclusion as a priority.

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Top 100

Companies

Top 100 Companies

These 100 websites were drawn from the Irish Times' 2023 compilation of the top 100 companies in Ireland. This annual list captures the country's largest enterprises, encompassing both Irish and multinational entities [4].

A specific portion of each website underwent rigorous accessibility testing, and the specific part examined is elaborated upon in the Assumptions section of this document.

It's noteworthy that while these websites are not overseen by public sector entities and thus aren't bound by the requirements of the WCAG 2.1 AA standard, the upcoming EAA will extend its scope to include private sector entities starting from June 2025 [5]. This forthcoming legislation will mandate enhanced accessibility measures, emphasising the importance of digital inclusivity across all sectors.

Digital Accessibility – General Overview

Among 100 companies, 27 passed IA Labs' accessibility reviews, with an average of 11.5 accessibility issues recorded per site.

In contrast, the remaining 73 websites did not pass, bearing an average of 38.2 accessibility issues each. Strikingly, the websites that fell short of accessibility standards showed an average of 2.3 times the number of issues compared to those that passed.

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Automated vs Manual – General Overview

Google Lighthouse identified an average of 18.3 issues per website. However, when subjected to manual testing by IA Labs experts, the average number of issues detected rose to 31. This signifies that IA Labs identified nearly twice the number of issues compared to the automated tests performed by Google Lighthouse.

The data reveals a distinct contrast in the number of accessibility issues detected when using two different assessment methods: automated testing via Google Lighthouse and manual testing conducted by IA Labs experts.

Automated tools are designed to scan web content and identify common accessibility concerns based on predefined algorithms. While they are effective at identifying certain issues, they may not capture nuanced or complex problems that require human judgment and context understanding.

Manual testing involves human evaluators meticulously interacting with the website, simulating various user scenarios and assistive technologies like screen readers, and thoroughly assessing the overall user experience. This hands-on approach enables testers to uncover more intricate accessibility barriers that automated tools might overlook.

The significant discrepancy between the two averages, where IA Labs' manual testing revealed nearly twice the number of issues compared to

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Google Lighthouse's automated assessment, underscores the limitations of relying solely on automated testing.

In essence, while automated tools provide a helpful initial assessment, manual testing provides a deeper and more nuanced understanding of accessibility barriers, ultimately contributing to the creation of more inclusive digital experiences for all users.

Issues Based on Company Ranking

When examining the websites that fell within the lower ranking range of 91 to 100, an average of 30.3 accessibility issues were identified per site. This higher average suggests that these websites encountered a greater number of challenges in terms of accessibility features and compliance with standards. The issues detected range from inadequate labelling of elements for screen readers to insufficient colour contrast ratios and other accessibility shortcomings.

Conversely, websites occupying the higher ranking bracket of 1 to 10 fared better during accessibility reviews, with an average of 18.8 issues per site. This lower average implies that these websites exhibit comparatively fewer barriers to access, offering a smoother experience for users, including those with disabilities. The websites in this category have invested in robust accessibility measures, such as clear alt text for images, proper heading structures, and keyboard navigation compatibility.

Top 100 Companies Average Accessibility Issues
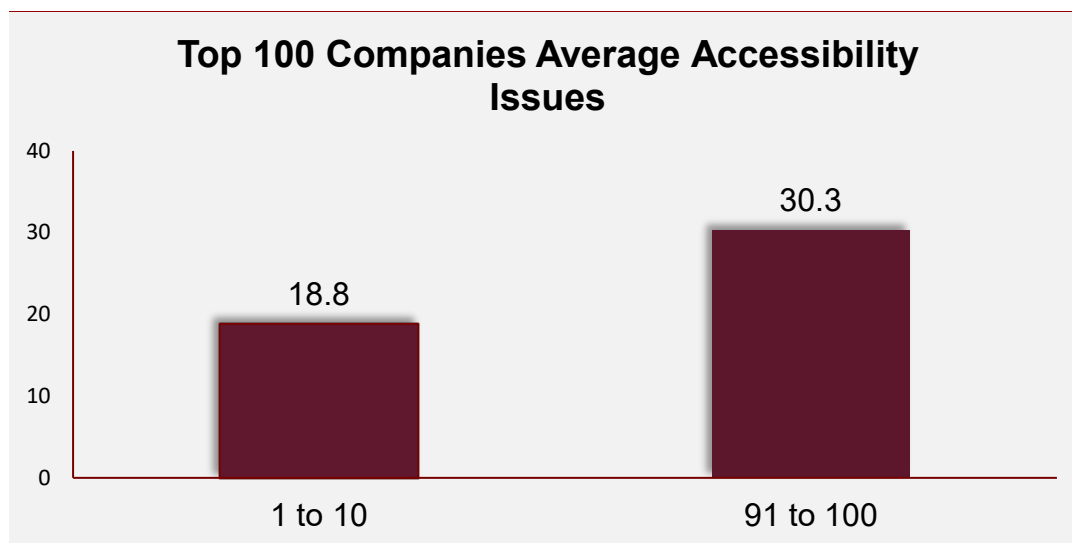
Figure 11: Top 100 Companies Average Accessibility Issues Based on Company Ranking

The pronounced correlation observed between a company's rank and the accessibility quality of its website is a noteworthy finding. It indicates that companies achieving top positions in the Irish Times top 100 list tend to prioritise and invest in digital accessibility, resulting in websites that are more user-friendly and inclusive. This correlation underscores the importance of fostering accessibility awareness and practices within corporate strategies, not only to enhance user experiences but also to align with evolving legal requirements and societal expectations for digital inclusivity.

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Accessibility Statement – General Overview

Among the top 100 company websites, a mere 26 have published an accessibility statement, with 20 either alluding to an outdated standard or omitting references altogether. Only six companies have statements that align with the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard. The companies adhering to the correct standard within their accessibility statements include LinkedIn, Alere International, Regeneron Ireland, Eli Lilly, Smurfit Kappa, and Salesforce.
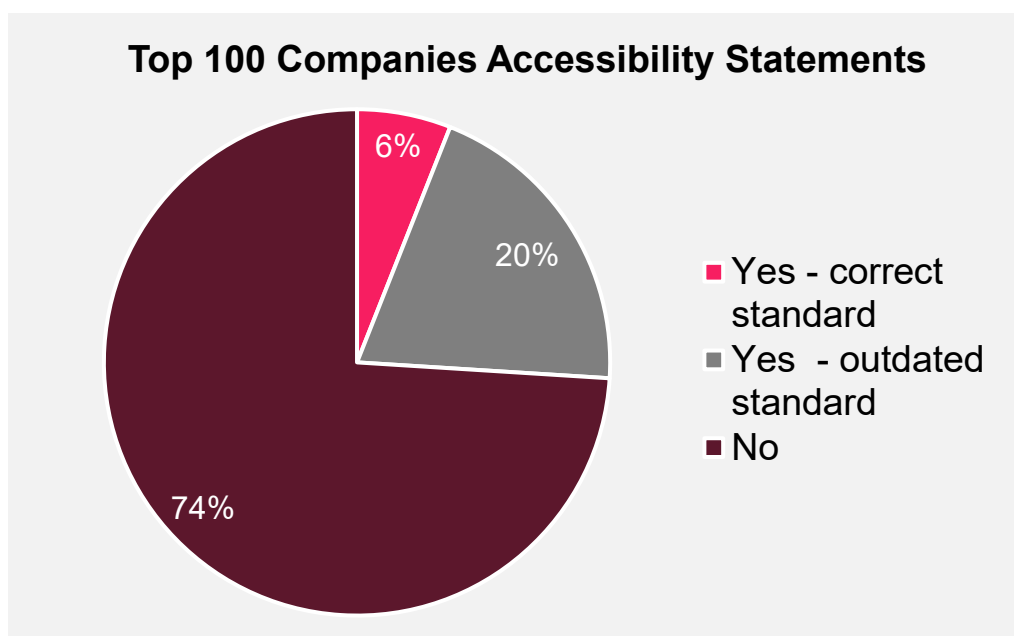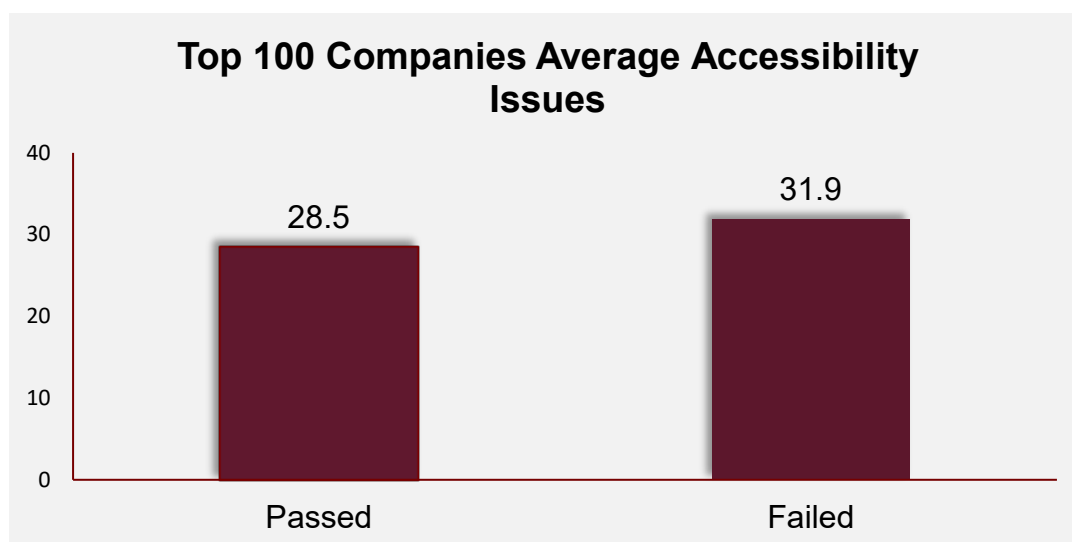

Figure 12: Top 100 Companies Accessibility Statements

Delving further, the 26 companies who have published an accessibility statement have an average of 28.5 accessibility issues. The remaining 74 companies have an elevated average of 31.9 issues each, displaying a 13% increase in issue frequency. Interestingly, this increase

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underscores an important observation – that even organisations attuned to digital accessibility might sometimes encounter challenges in translating awareness into effective implementation.

Top 100 Companies Average Accessibility Issues

Figure 13: Top 100 Companies Average Accessibility Issues Based on Pass/Fail

This data prompts the realisation that while awareness is a crucial first step, the proficiency required for seamless accessibility execution might demand additional expertise. This serves as a reminder that ensuring a truly inclusive digital landscape necessitates a combination of awareness, dedication, and specialised knowledge.

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Manufacturing Industry

Of the top 100 companies, 11 belong to the manufacturing sector. These are listed below:

- Apple Ireland
- Medtronic plc
- Eaton Corp
- Dell Ireland
- Trane Technologies
- MSD
- Smurfit Kappa
- Ardagh Glass Sales
- Sisk Group
- Glen Dimplex
- Greencore

Digital Accessibility

Out of the 11 companies in this sector, five (46%) passed, as they have only a few minor issues. These were Apple Ireland, Medtronic, Dell, Trane Technologies, Smurfit Kappa; an average of 9.2 accessibility issues were detected on these five websites.

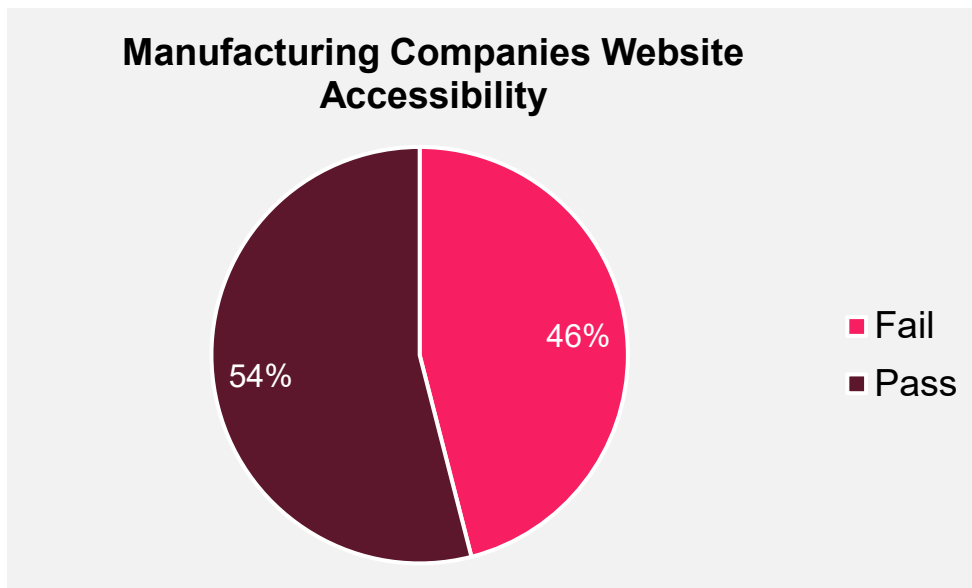The other six company websites (54%) failed, with an average of 37 issues each.

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Manufacturing Companies Website Accessibility

Figure 14: Digital Accessibility of Manufacturing Websites

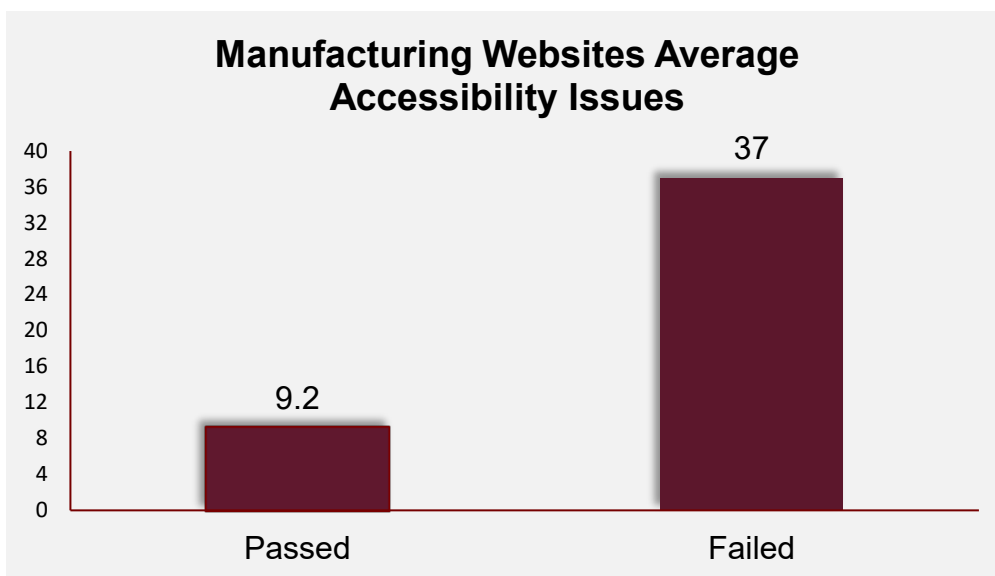**Manufacturing Websites Average Accessibility Issues**

Figure 15: Manufacturing Websites Average Accessibility Issues

In the manufacturing industry, link labels emerge as a paramount concern. Links bearing generic labels such as 'click here' or 'read more' fail to convey sufficient context to users, resulting in diminished interaction and engagement with these links.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- Inaccessible navigation menus.
- Carousels with automatic movement and no pause option.
- Images excluded from the reading order and lacking alt text.
- Unlabelled interactive elements.
- Confusing reading order arrangements.

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- Nine websites (82%) have no accessibility statement on their website.

- One (9%: Sisk Group) has a statement but references an outdated standard.

- Only one company (9%: Smurfit Kappa) references the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard.
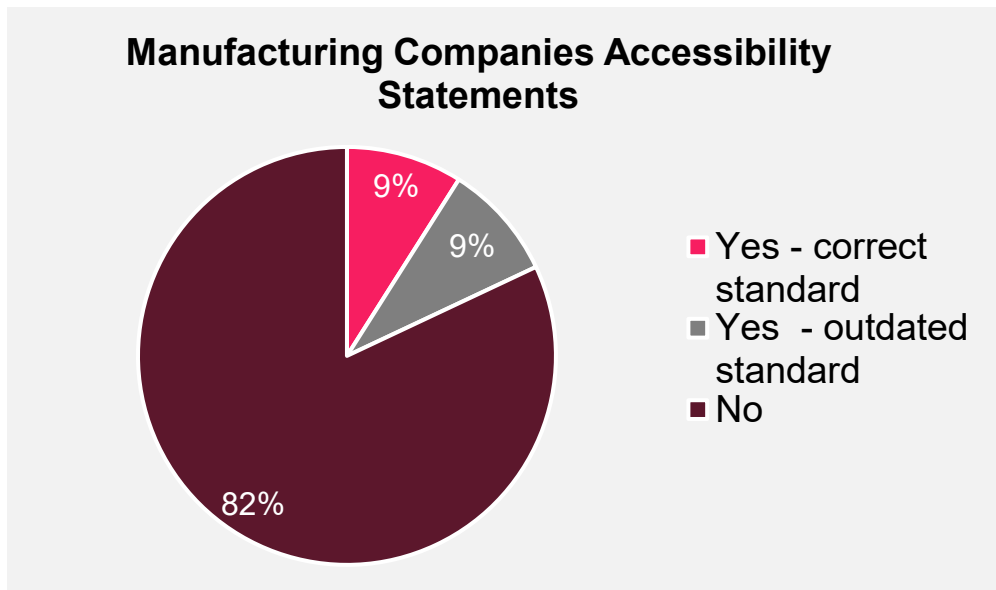
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Manufacturing Companies Accessibility Statements

Figure 16: Manufacturing Websites Accessibility Statements

Technology and Communications

Of the top 100 companies, 27 belong to the technology and communications sector. These are listed below:

- Apple Ireland

- Google

- Microsoft

- Meta

- Johnson Control

- DCC

- Oracle

- Vodafone

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- Kingston

- SanDisk

- VMWare

- Adobe

- Analog Devices

- Intel Ireland

- Amazon Data Services

- Maxim Integrated Products

- Salesforce

- NCR

- Eircom

- Twitter

- HP Ireland

- Dell Ireland

- Microchip Technology

- Glen Dimplex

- Sandvik

- LinkedIn

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Digital Accessibility

Out of the 27 companies in this sector, 10 (38%) passed, as they have only a few minor issues. These websites have an average of 9.5 accessibility issues each.

The other 17 companies (62%) failed and have an average of 36.2 accessibility issues each.
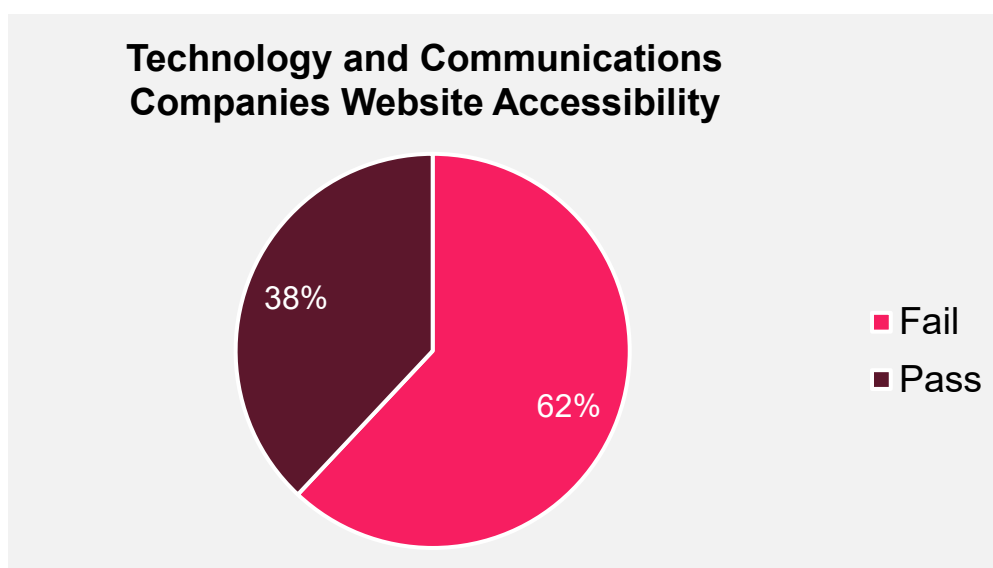
Figure 17: Digital Accessibility of Technology and Communications Websites
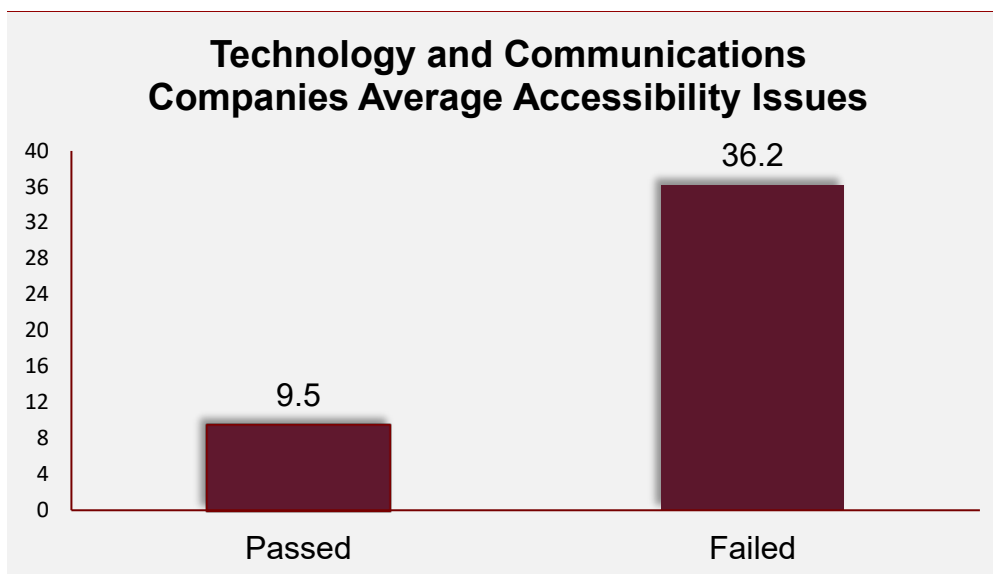
**Technology and Communications
Companies Average Accessibility Issues**

Figure 18: Technology and Communication Websites Average Accessibility Issues

In the technology and communications sector, the foremost concern is the absence of mobile responsiveness. With a significant number of users navigating the web via mobile devices or opting to zoom in on laptops and desktops for enhanced readability, the failure of a website to adapt to varying device sizes or zoom levels leads to content overlap and poor interaction. This not only compromises visual integrity but also makes it more challenging to engage with a website.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

● Images skipped in reading order and with no alt text

● Low colour contrast ratio

● Disappearing focus

● Interactive elements not labelled uniquely or descriptively

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- Inability to access cookie popups

- Navigation menu inaccessible using a keyboard

- Sections of content inaccessible using a keyboard

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- 18 companies (68%) have no accessibility statement on their website.

- Seven (27%: Google, Meta, DCC, NCR, Eircom, Twitter, and Sandvik) have a statement but reference an outdated standard or do not mention a standard at all.

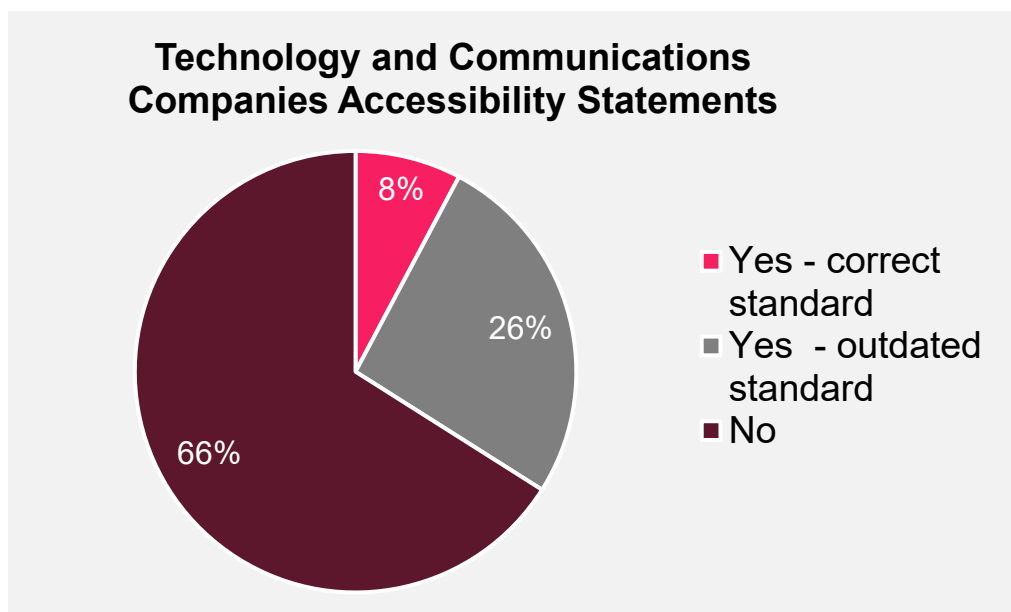- Only two (8%: Salesforce and LinkedIn) reference the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

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**Technology and Communications
Companies Accessibility Statements**

Figure 19: Technology and Communications Websites Accessibility Statements

Health and Pharmaceuticals

Of the top 100 companies, 21 belong to the health and pharmaceuticals sector. These are listed below:

- DCC

- Medtronic plc

- AbbVie

- Pfizer

- Gilead Sciences

- MSD

- Boston Scientific

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- Perrigo

- Abbott Laboratories

- Alexion Pharmaceuticals

- Icon plc

- Jazz Pharmaceuticals

- BD

- Uniphar

- Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals

- Takeda

- Regeneron Ireland

- Sanofi Genzyme

- Eli Lilly

- Horizon Therapeutics

- BioMarin

Digital Accessibility

Out of the 21 companies in this sector, six (29%) passed, as they have only a few minor issues. These are Medtronic plc, Pfizer, Gilead Sciences, Takeda, Regeneron Ireland, and Eli Lilly. The websites of these companies have an average of 13 accessibility issues each.

The other 15 (71%) websites failed and have an average of 26.5 accessibility issues each.
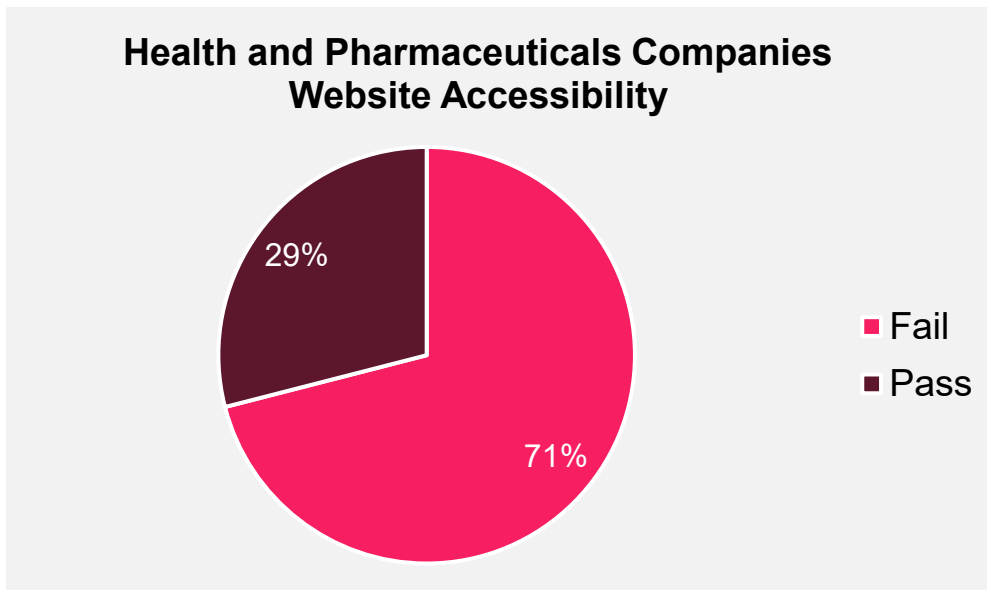
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Health and Pharmaceuticals Companies Website Accessibility

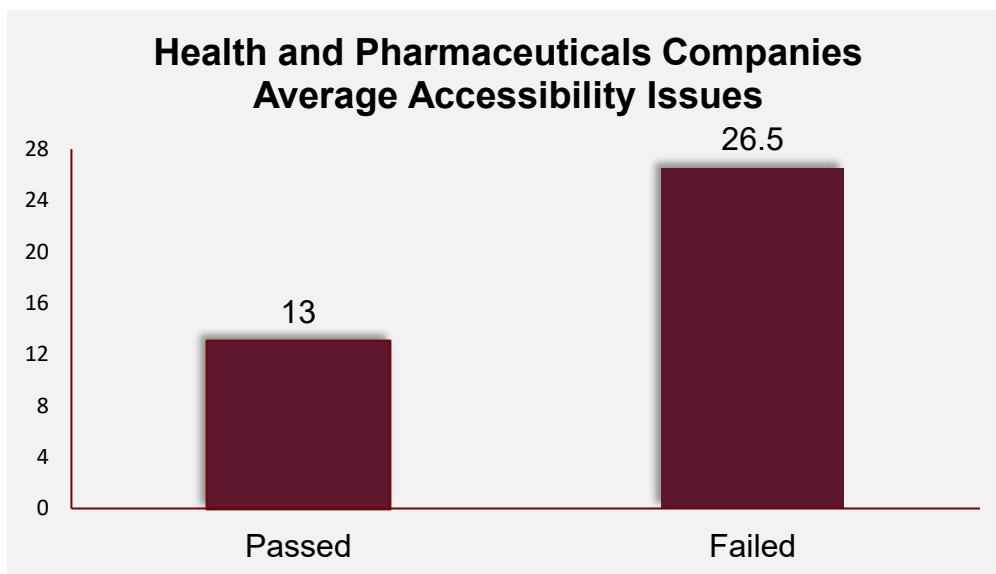*Figure 20: Digital Accessibility of Health and Pharmaceutical Websites*

Figure 21: Health and Pharmaceutical Websites Average Accessibility Issues

The most critical issue in the health and pharmaceuticals industry is low colour contrast. People with colour-blindness, low vision, dyslexia, and other learning disabilities will find it difficult or even impossible to read text or identify buttons that do not have high contrast against the background colour.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- Navigation menu inaccessible using a keyboard

- No Skip to Content button

- Images with no alt text

- Unlabelled interactive elements

- Low colour contrast ratio

- Videos/carousels play automatically and can't be paused

- Confusing heading structure

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- 16 websites (76%) have no accessibility statement on their website.

- Three (14%: DCC, Takeda, and Sanofi Genzyme) have a statement but reference an outdated standard.

- Only two (10%: Regeneron Ireland and Eli Lilly) reference the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard.
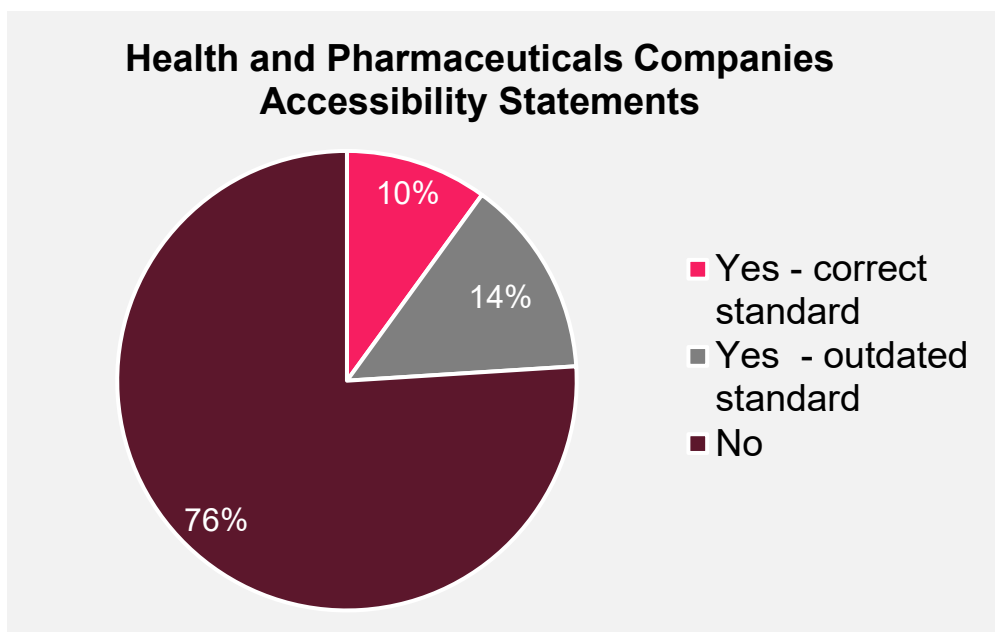
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Health and Pharmaceuticals Companies Accessibility Statements

Figure 22: Health and Pharmaceutical Websites Accessibility Statements

Construction and Property

Of the top 100 companies, eight are in the construction and property industry. These are listed below:
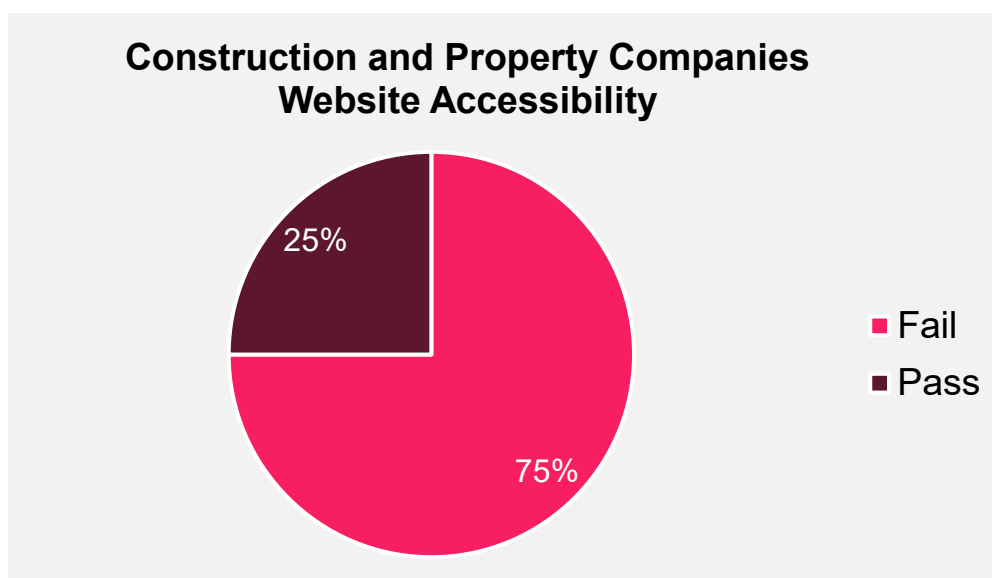
- Exyte Northern Europe Limited

- Mercury Engineering

- CRH

- Trane Technologies

- Kingston

- Kingspan

- Grafton Group plc

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- Sisk Group

Digital Accessibility

Out of the eight companies in this sector, two (25%) passed, as they have only a few minor issues. These are CRH and Trane Technologies. The websites of these companies have an average of 18.5 accessibility issues each.

The six companies (75%) that failed have an average of 39.8 accessibility issues each.

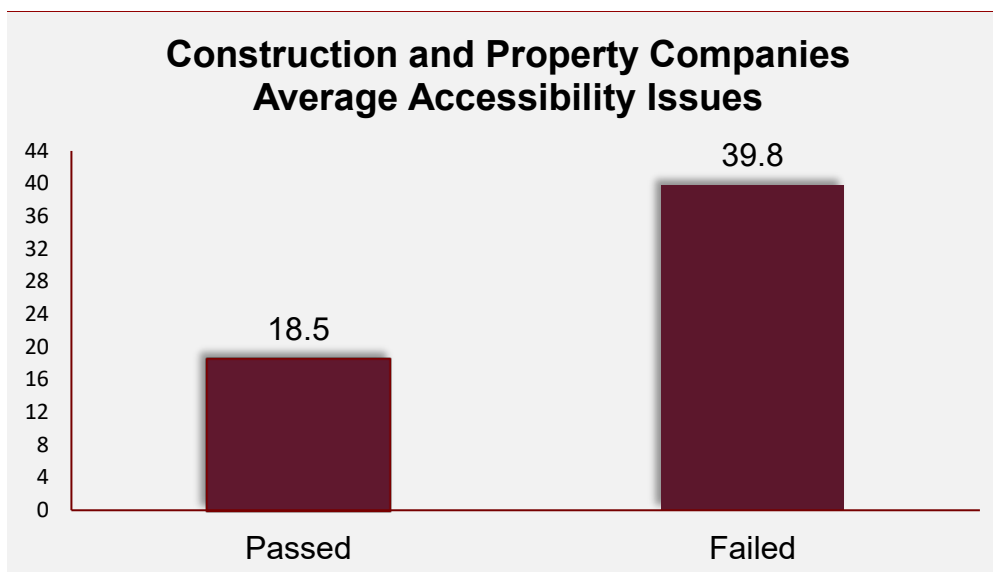*Figure 23: Digital Accessibility of Construction and Property Websites*

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Figure 24: Construction and Property Websites Average Accessibility Issues

In the realm of the construction and property industry, the most important accessibility concern centres around the absence of alternate text descriptions, commonly referred to as alt text, for images. This directly impacts individuals with visual impairments, preventing them from accessing the information that images convey. When alt text is either missing or insufficiently descriptive, individuals with sight loss are left without the context necessary to understand the visual content, thereby hindering their comprehensive engagement with the digital material.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- Inaccessible videos

- Low colour contrast

- Focus moving to hidden objects

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- Carousels move automatically with no way to pause

- Interactive elements not labelled uniquely

- Content disappears when page is zoomed in

- Confusing reading order

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- Five companies (62%) have no accessibility statement on their website.

- Three of them (38%: CRH, Grafton Group Plc, and Sisk Group) have a statement but reference an outdated standard.
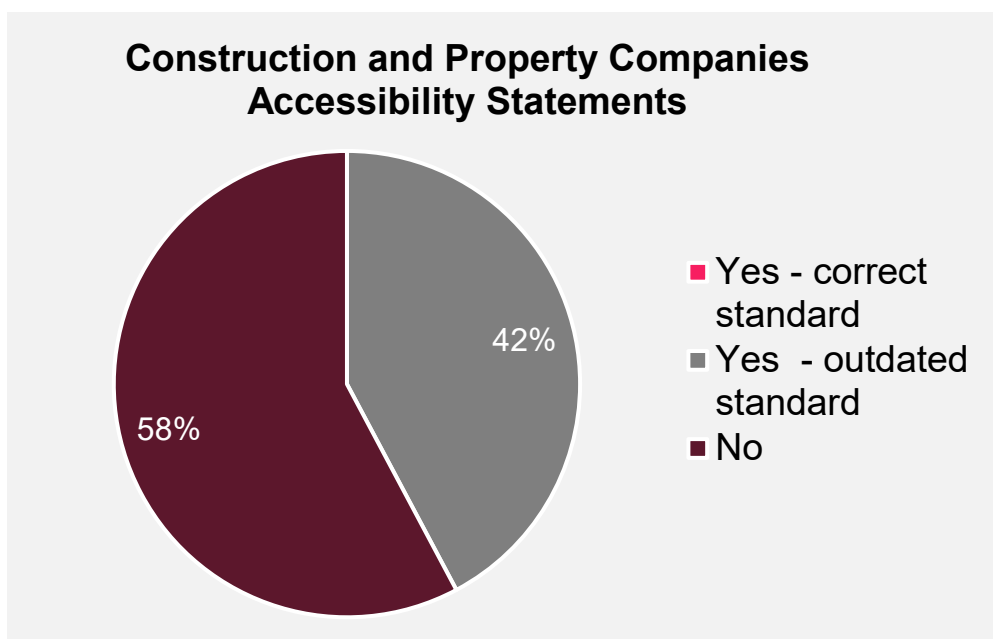
- None reference the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

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Figure 25: Construction and Property Websites Accessibility Statements

Energy and Resources

Of the top 100 companies, 11 of them belong to the energy and resources sector. These are listed below:

- CRH

- DCC

- Peninsula Petroleum

- ESB

- Applegreen

- Circle K Ireland Energy Group Ltd

- Valero Energy Corporation

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- Top Oil

- Tullow Oil

- Uisce Eireann

- Energia

Digital Accessibility

Out of the 11 companies in this sector, three (27.3%) passed, as they have only a few minor issues. These were CRH, Peninsula Petroleum, and Uisce Eireann. The websites of these companies have an average of 18.3 accessibility issues each.

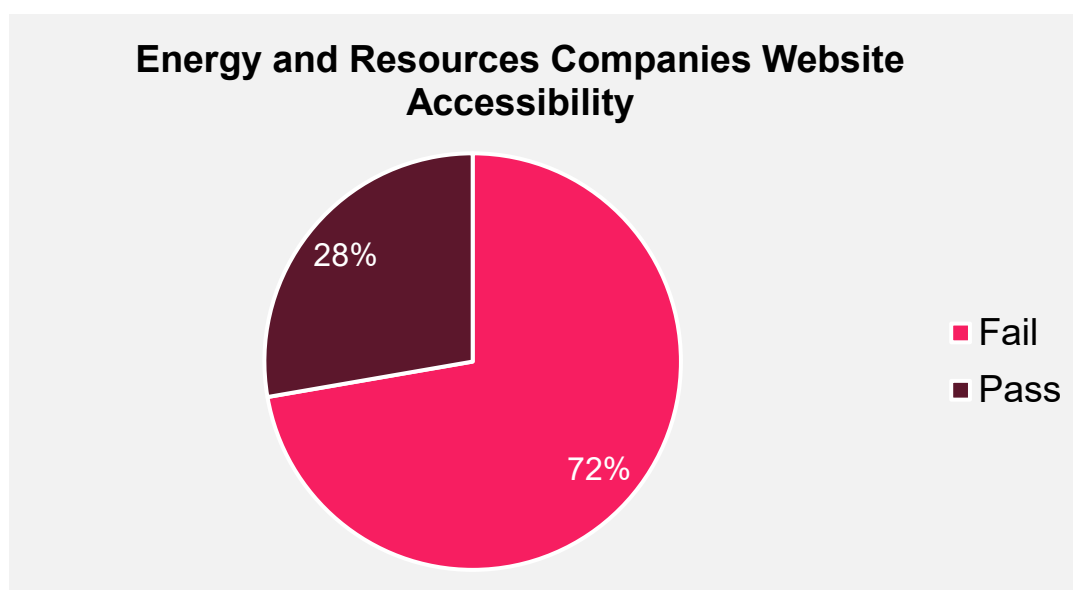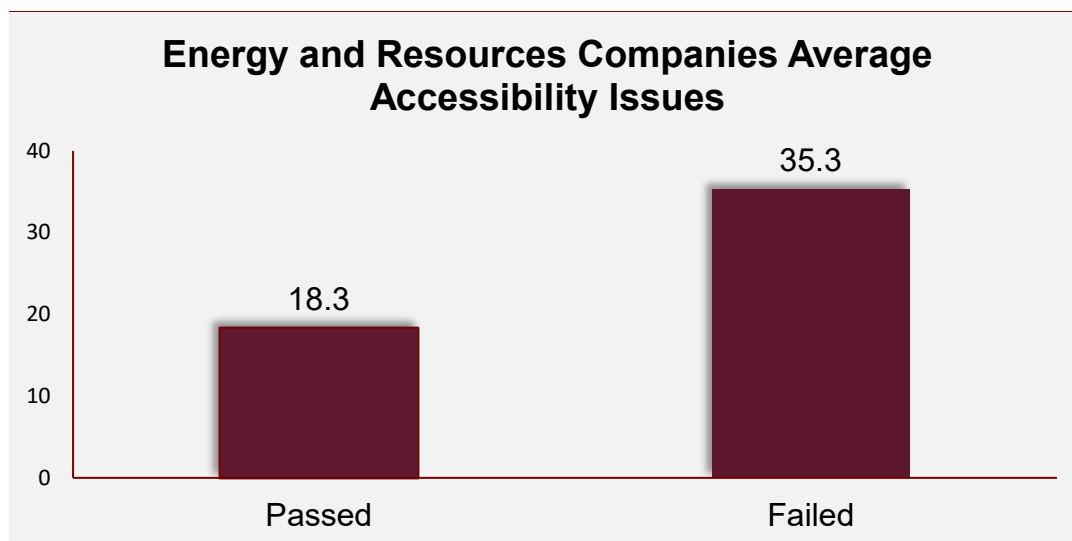The other eight (72.7%) failed and have an average of 35.3 issues each.

Figure 26: Digital Accessibility of Energy and Resources Websites

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Energy and Resources Companies Average Accessibility Issues

Figure 27: Energy and Resources Websites Average Accessibility Issues

Within the energy and resources sector, the primary accessibility concerns revolve around carousels and dynamic content. The absence of mechanisms to pause moving and auto-updating content poses a significant challenge, particularly for users with low vision, reading difficulties, and cognitive disabilities. This disorienting effect often prompts users to abandon the website. Additionally, moving carousels can create complications for assistive technologies, potentially trapping users within content and inhibiting their ability to navigate further through the website. These issues underscore the critical need to ensure that dynamic elements are thoughtfully designed to accommodate diverse user needs and maintain a seamless digital experience.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

● Images and graphs with no alt text

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- Navigational menu inaccessible to a keyboard

- Focus order issues

- Content disappears when page is zoomed in

- Interactive elements without descriptive/unique labels

- Heading structure issues

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- Five companies (45.5%) have no accessibility statement on their website.

- Five companies (45.5%: CRH, Uisce Eireann, DCC, ESB, and Tullow Oil) have a statement but reference an outdated standard.

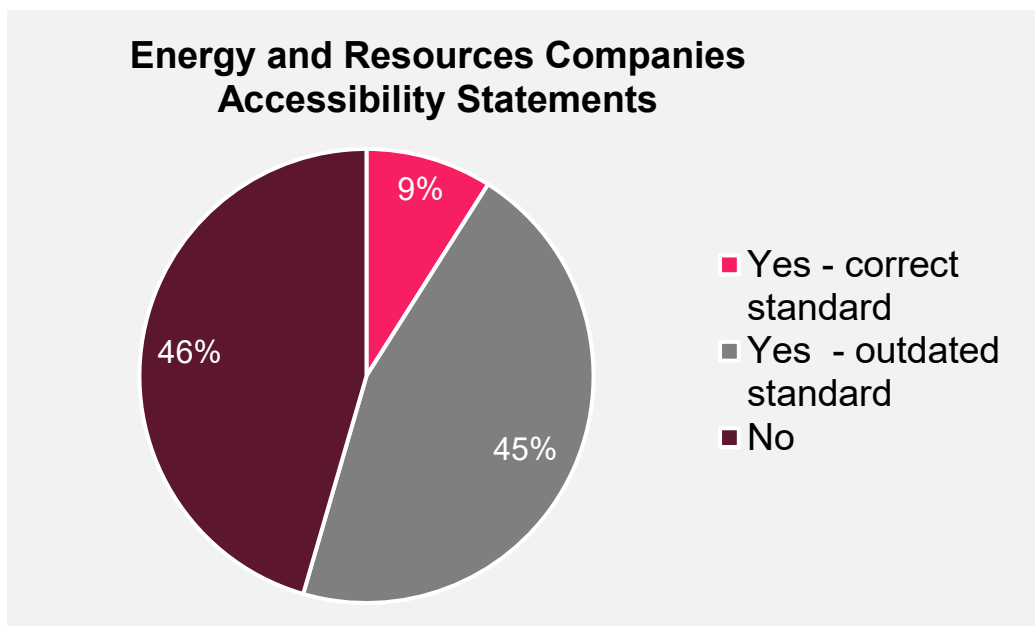- Only one company (9%: Valero Energy Corporation) references the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

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Figure 28: Energy and Resources Websites Accessibility Statement

Professional Services and Finance

Of the top 100 companies, seven belong to the professional services and finance industries. These are listed below:

- Trane Technologies

- Salesforce

- PCH International

- Energia Group

- Experian

- Mercury Engineering

- Stripe

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Digital Accessibility

Out of the seven companies in this sector, three (43%) passed, as they had only a few minor issues. These were Trane Technologies, Salesforce, and Experian.

The other four companies (57%) failed and have an average of 37.3 issues each.
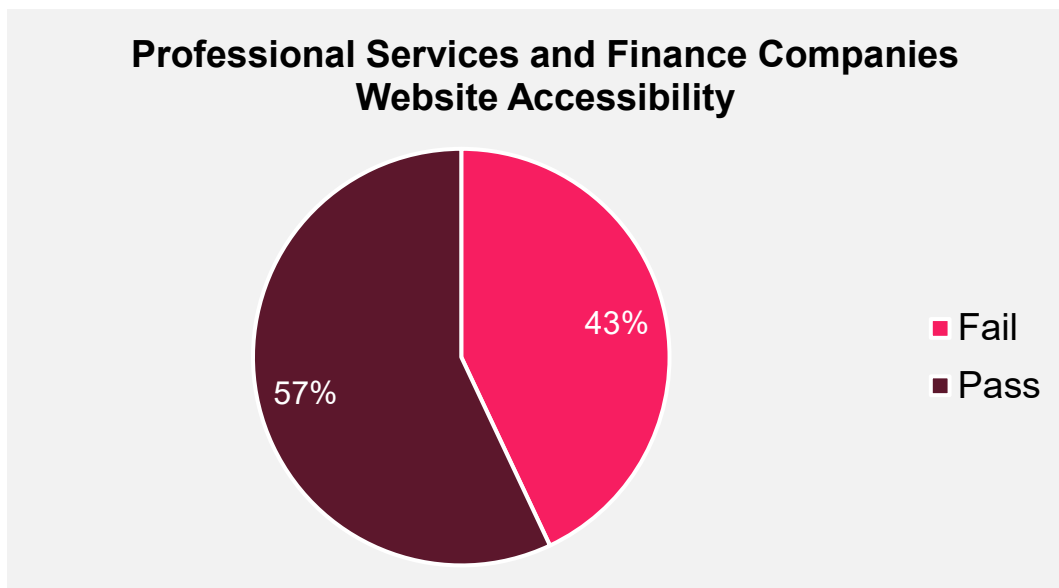
Professional Services and Finance Companies Website Accessibility

Figure 29: Digital Accessibility of Professional Services and Finance Websites

**Professional Services and Finance Companies
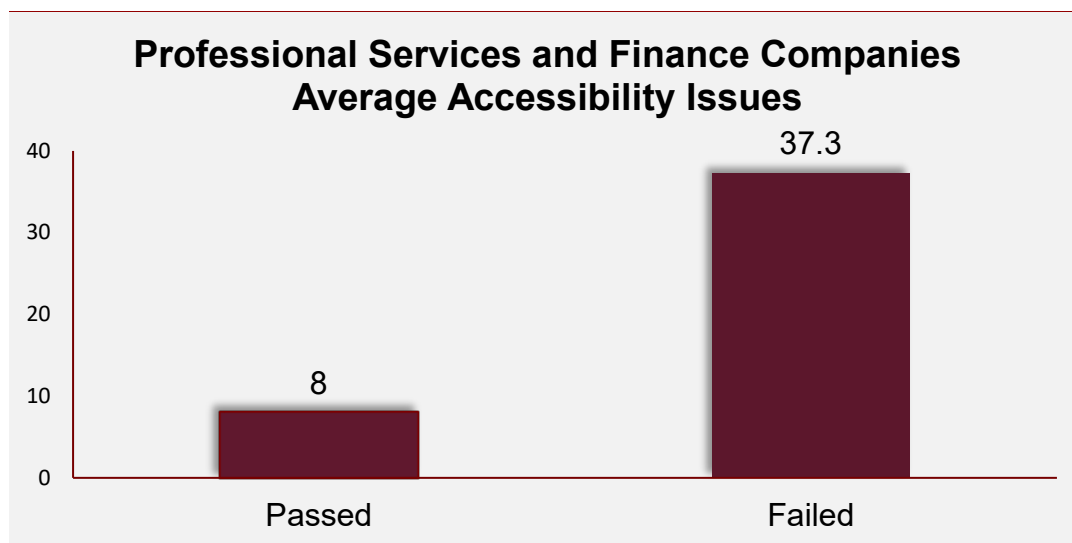Average Accessibility Issues**

Figure 30: Professional Services and Finance Websites Average Accessibility Issues

A significant concern within the professional services and finance sector centres on navigation menus exclusively accessible through mouse hover. This design flaw poses a significant challenge for users with disabilities who rely on alternative input methods, as they might not use a traditional mouse when navigating the web. When navigation menus cannot be accessed solely through keyboard interactions, users are hindered from advancing beyond the homepage, consequently missing out on the complete content and functionality of a website. This underscores the necessity for inclusive design that caters to a diverse range of user interactions, ensuring equitable access for all.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

● Images missing alt text or needing more descriptive alt text

● Confusing heading structure

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- Inaccessible navigation menus

- Interactive aspects not accessible via keyboard

- Contrast of content not high enough

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- Six companies (86%) have no accessibility statement on their website.

- Only one company (14%: Salesforce) references the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

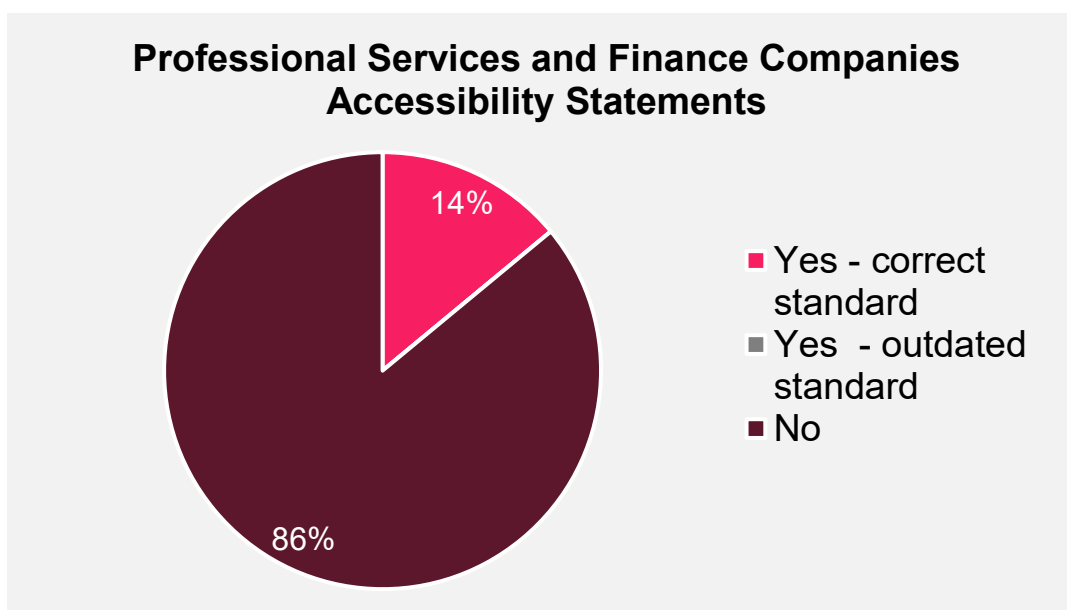*Figure 31: Professional Services and Finance Websites Accessibility Statements*

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Transport and Tourism

Of the top 100 companies, three of them belong to the transport and tourism sector. These are listed below:

- Applegreen

- Ryanair

- Airbnb

Digital Accessibility

All three companies failed, with an average of 41.7 accessibility issues each.

The transport and tourism sector's most pressing accessibility concern is primarily tied to images devoid of alt text. Given that transport options and tourist attractions rely on image-based advertisements, the absence of alt text deprives users of essential information conveyed through these visuals, consequently undermining their engagement with the industry's offerings.

Furthermore, the industry encounters challenges related to unlabelled forms and inaccessible dropdowns for ticket booking. This significantly impacts individuals using screen readers or facing dexterity limitations, as the inability to access and interact with these elements hinders their capability to independently book tickets. These accessibility issues underscore the importance of implementing user-friendly design that

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ensures equal access for all individuals, thereby fostering an inclusive and rewarding experience within the transport and tourism domain.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- Incorrect or confusing focus order

- Inability to book flights

- Images of text that have no alt text

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

No company in this sector has published an accessibility statement.

Agribusiness and Food

Of the top 100 companies, 19 were in the agribusiness and food industries. These are listed below:

- Kerry Group

- Total Produce

- Glanbia

- Ornua

- Dawn Meats

- Moy Park

- Origin Enterprise Plc

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- Kepak

- Dunbia

- Dairygold

- Musgrave

- ABP Food Group

- Diageo

- Greencore

- C&C Group Plc

- BWG Group

- Valeo Foods

- Kellogg Ireland

- Lakeland Dairies

Digital Accessibility

Out of the 19 companies in this sector, three (16%) passed. These were Kerry Group, Dunbia, and Diageo. These websites had an average of 10 accessibility issues each.

The other 16 companies (84%) failed IA Labs' application of the WCAG 2.1 AA standard, with an average of 46 accessibility issues each.
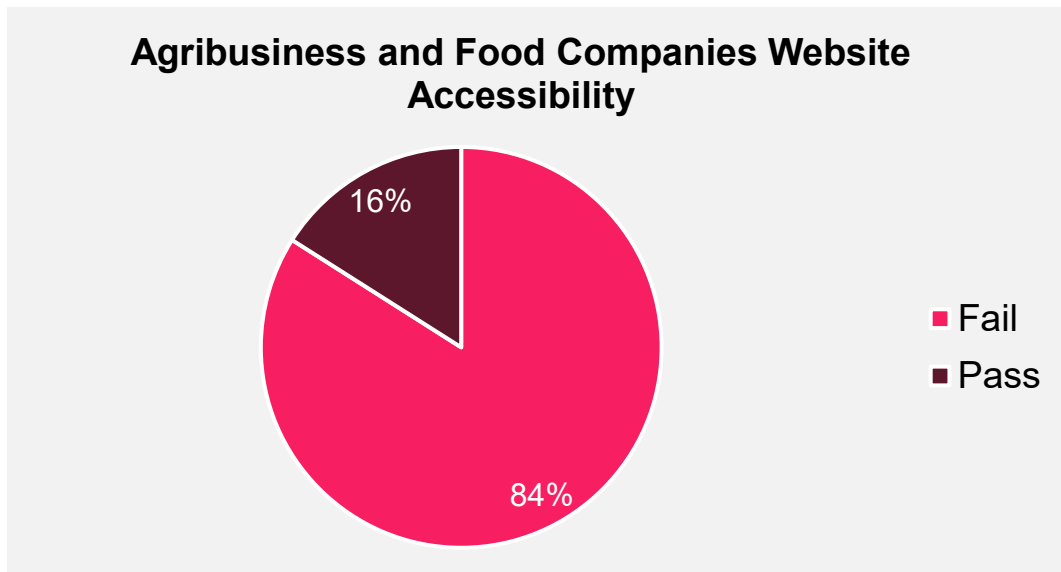
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Agribusiness and Food Companies Website Accessibility

Figure 32: Digital Accessibility of Agribusiness and Food Websites

Agribusiness and Food Companies Average Accessibility Issues
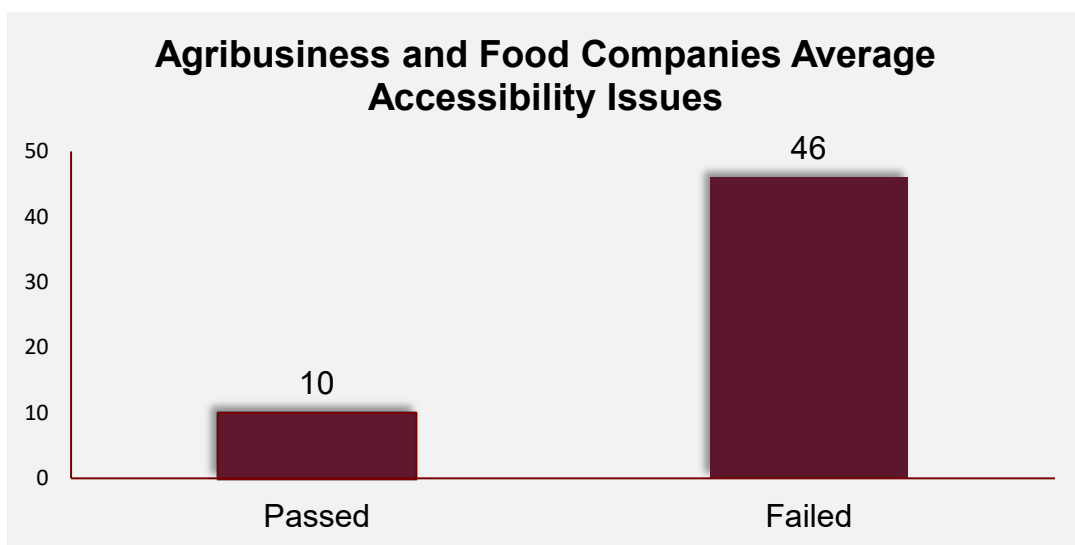

Figure 33: Agribusiness and Food Websites Average Accessibility Issues

A significant concern within the agribusiness and food sector centres on navigation menus exclusively accessible through mouse hover. This

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poses a significant challenge for users with disabilities who rely on alternative input methods, as they might not use a traditional mouse when navigating the web. When navigation menus cannot be accessed solely through keyboard interactions, users are hindered from advancing beyond the homepage, consequently missing out on the complete content and functionality of a website. This underscores the necessity for inclusive design that caters to a diverse range of user interactions, ensuring equitable access for all.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- No 'skip to main content' links

- Inaccessible navigation menus

- Carousels that move automatically

- Images with no alt text

- Interactive elements without descriptive/unique labels

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- 14 companies (74%) had no accessibility statement on their website.

- Five companies (26%: Total Produce, Glanbia, Moy Park, Diageo, Valeo Foods) of them had a statement, but referenced an outdated accessibility standard.

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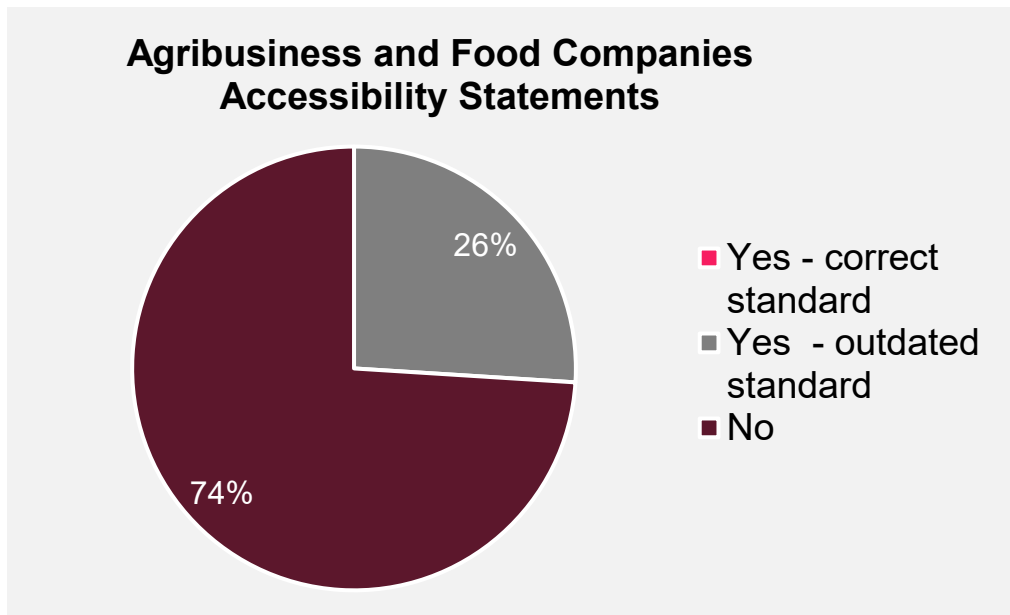- None referenced the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

Figure 34: Agribusiness and Food Websites Accessibility Statements

Retail

Of the top 100 companies, 15 were in the retail industry. These are listed below:

- Penneys

- Musgrave

- Dunnes Stores

- Applegreen

- Grafton Group Plc

- Tesco

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- Circle K Ireland Energy Group Ltd

- Maxim Integrated Products

- Amazon Data Services

- Aldi

- Lidl

- BWG Group

- Henderson Group

- Boylesports

- Flutter

Digital Accessibility

Out of the 15 companies in this sector, two (13%) passed; these were Penneys and Amazon Data Services with an average of 11.5 issues each.

13 companies (87%) failed IA Labs' application of the WCAG 2.1 AA standard and had an average of 50.8 accessibility issues each.
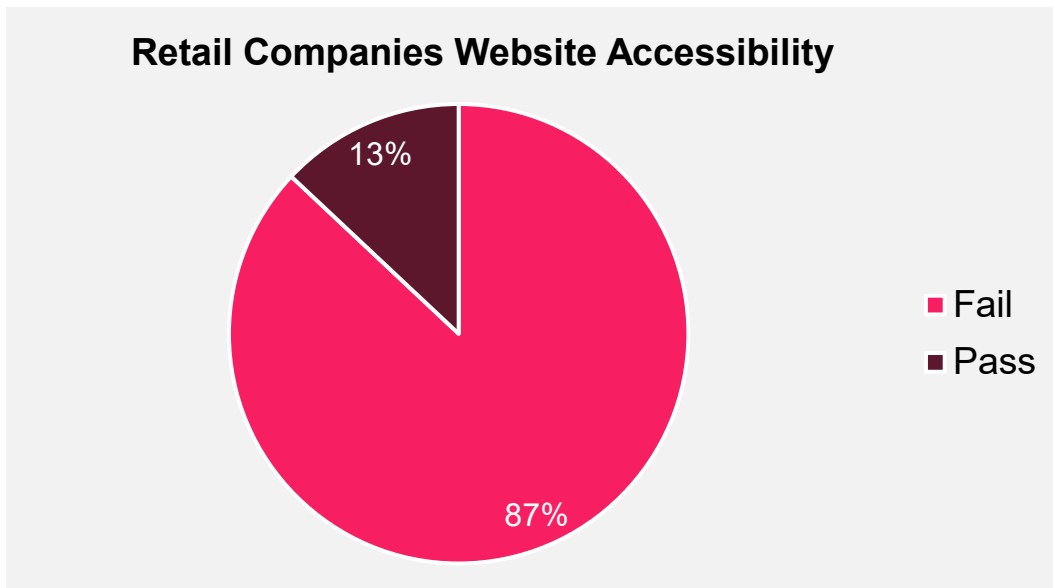
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Retail Companies Website Accessibility

Figure 35: Digital Accessibility of Retail Websites

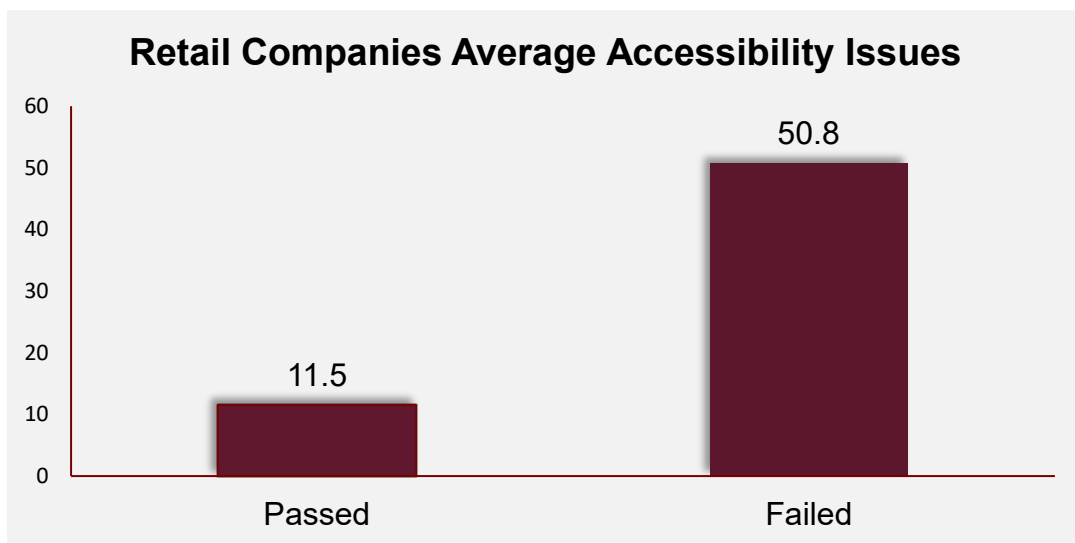**Retail Companies Average Accessibility Issues**

Figure 36: Retail Websites Average Accessibility Issues

A paramount accessibility concern within the retail industry pertains to websites lacking keyboard accessibility. Individuals with disabilities often

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rely on keyboard navigation instead of traditional mice, and when interactive elements such as links, buttons, form fields, and menus cannot be engaged using a keyboard alone, these users are effectively barred from accessing the same information and retail opportunities available to their peers. Addressing keyboard accessibility ensures equitable access for all users, regardless of their preferred mode of interaction, and underscores the industry's commitment to fostering inclusive and accessible digital experiences that cater to diverse needs.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- Interactive elements that need descriptive/unique labels

- Images missing alt text

- Inaccessible navigation menus

- Heading structure issues

- Reading and focus order issues

- Sections of content inaccessible using a keyboard

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- 12 companies (80%) had no accessibility statement on their website.

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- Three companies (20%: Grafton Group Plc, Henderson Group, and Tesco) had an accessibility statement but referenced an outdated standard.
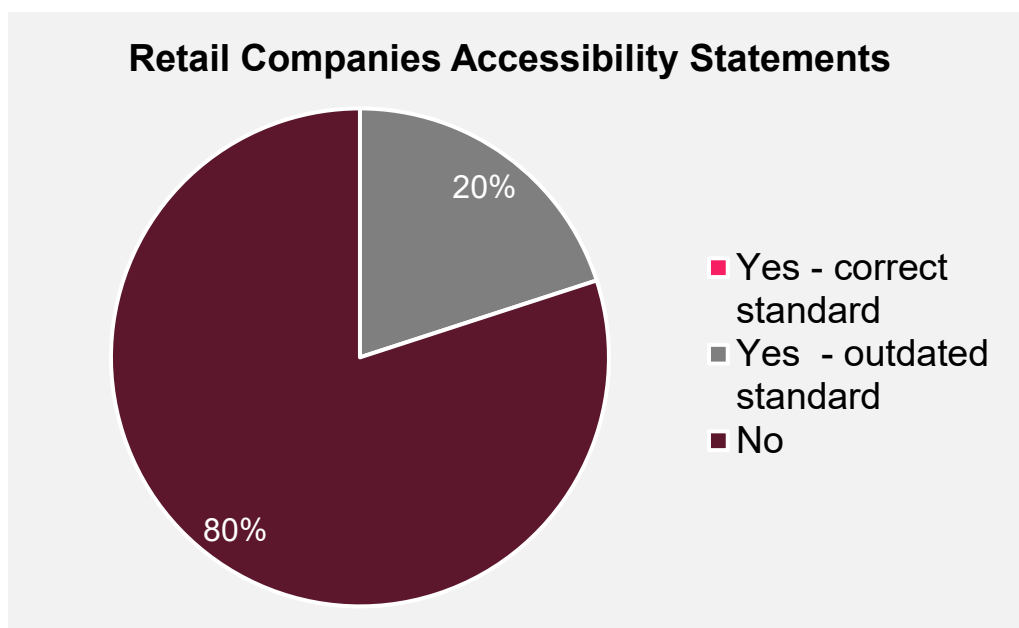
- None referenced the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

Retail Companies Accessibility Statements

Figure 37: Retail Websites Accessibility Statements

Industry Comparison

Digital Accessibility

The Technology and Communications industry stands out as a frontrunner. Within this sector, a significant 35% of websites have successfully met most accessibility standards, marking a substantial stride towards inclusivity and user-friendliness.

Accessibility Statement

Addressing the need for transparency and adherence to accessibility standards, the professional services and finance industry emerges as a leader in providing clear and informative accessibility statements.

14.7% of the accessibility statements within this industry accurately reference the appropriate standards.

Yearly Comparison

Digital Accessibility

In the past year, 22 out of the top 100 company websites were deemed to have met the prescribed accessibility standards. Demonstrating a clear upward trajectory in prioritising accessibility, this year, the number of usable websites has risen to 27 out of the top 100. This increase signifies a commendable improvement in the commitment of these companies towards making their digital platforms more inclusive and user-friendly for individuals with diverse abilities and needs. It underscores a growing awareness and recognition of the importance of

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digital accessibility in providing an equitable online experience for all users.

Accessibility Statement

While progress is being made in the realm of digital accessibility, it's disheartening to note that the numbers of companies accurately referencing the crucial WCAG 2.1 AA standard in their accessibility statements remain relatively low. In the previous year, only five companies demonstrated this commitment to transparency and compliance. Even with a marginal increase to six companies this year, the overall figure is insufficient, given the vast landscape of companies and websites. This suggests that a significant portion of businesses still fall short in clearly communicating their dedication to accessibility or may not be fully aware of the appropriate standards.

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Education

Education

Ensuring every child's right to education is a fundamental principle upheld in Ireland. Given its importance, we undertook a comprehensive accessibility review focusing on the accessibility of websites belonging to universities, the top 10 private secondary schools, and the leading 10 public secondary schools within the Republic of Ireland [6]. Notably, all the public schools and universities listed, with the exception of the Royal College of Surgeons, fall under the umbrella of public sector entities. Consequently, adherence to the 2020 EU Regulations for digital accessibility is obligatory for them [7].

The university websites are:

- Atlantic Technological University

- Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology

- Dundalk Institute of Technology

- Dublin City University

- Mary Immaculate college

- Maynooth College

- National College of Art and Design

- RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences

- Royal Irish Academy

- South East Technological University

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- St. Angela's College

- Trinity College

- University College Cork

- University College Dublin

- University of Galway

- University of Limerick

- Munster Technology University

- National University of Ireland

- Technological University Dublin

- Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest

The top 10 private secondary schools are:

1. Gonzaga College, Ranelagh, Dublin

2. Loreto College, St Stephen's Green, Dublin

3. Scoil Mhuire, Sidney Place, Cork

4. Mount Anville Secondary School, Goatstown, Dublin

5. The Teresian School, Donnybrook, Dublin

6. St Gerard's School, Bray, Wicklow

7. Loreto High School Beaufort, Rathfarnham, Dublin

8. St Michael's College, Ailesbury Road, Dublin

9. St Kilian's Deutsche Schile, Clonskeagh, Dublin

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10. Blackrock College, Blackrock, Dublin

The top 10 public secondary schools:

1. Colaiste Iosogain, Booterstown, Dublin

2. Laurel Hill Colaiste FCJ, South Circular Road, Limerick

3. Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf, Dublin

4. Muckross Park College, Donnybrook, Dublin

5. Salerno Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Salthill, Galway

6. Gaelcholaiste Reachrann, Donaghmede, Dublin

7. Colaiste na Coiribe, Knicknacarra, Galway

8. Colaiste Naomh Mhuire, Naas, Kildare

9. Colaiste Iognaid SJ, Sea Road, Galway

10. Mount Mercy College, Model Farm Road, Cork

Digital Accessibility

Out of the 39 educational institutions, four (5%) passed: these were Munster Technological University, Technological University Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, and University of Limerick, with an average of 11.3 issues each.

35 institutions (95%) failed IA Labs' application of the WCAG 2.1 AA standard and had an average of 37.3 accessibility issues each.

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Education Institutions Website Accessibility
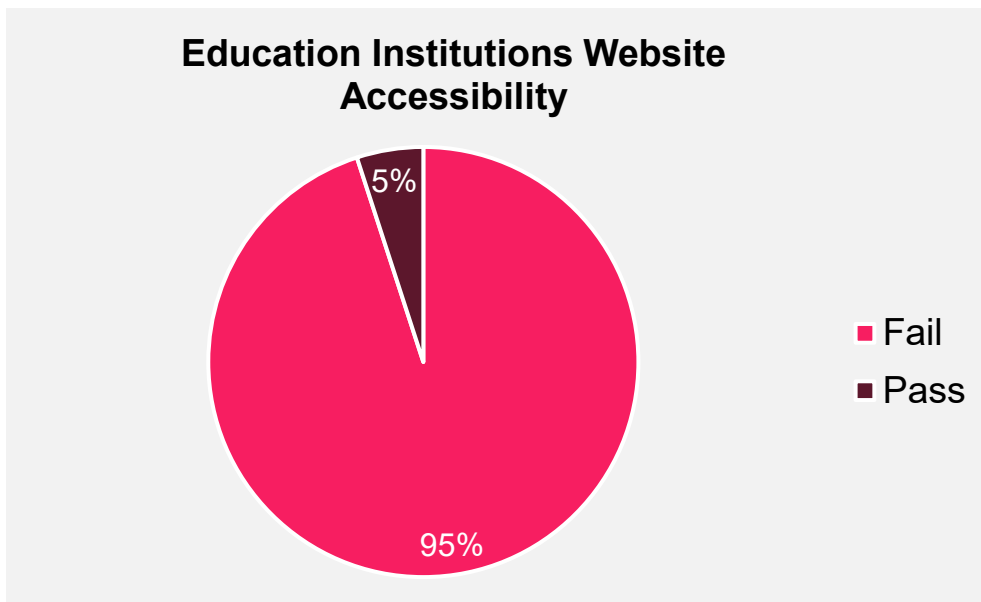
Figure 38: Digital Accessibility of Education Websites

Education Institutions Average Accessibility Issues
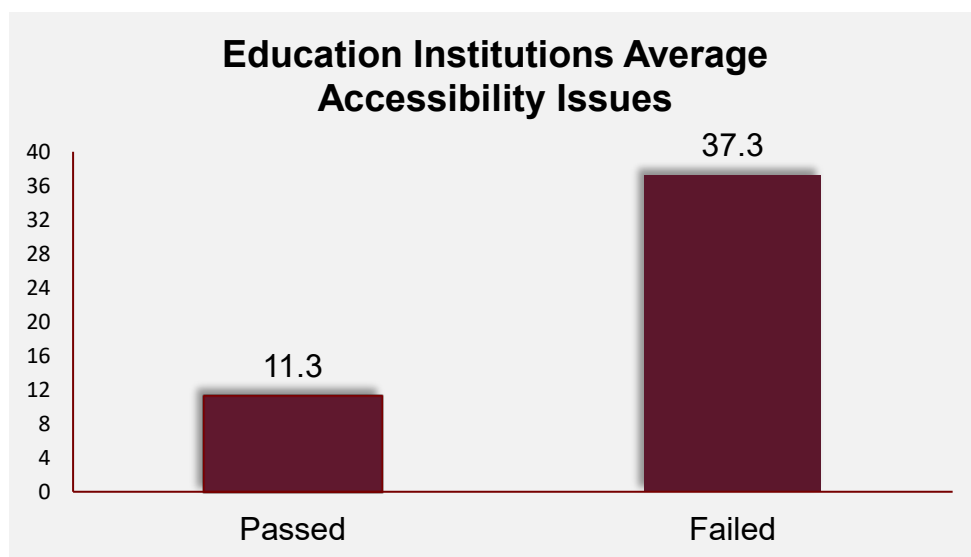
Figure 39: Education Websites Average Accessibility Issues

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Key concerns within the Education sector revolve around two significant issues: inadequate colour contrast and inaccessible navigation menus. This poses a significant challenge for individuals with low vision, colour-blindness, and reading disorders such as dyslexia. When text lacks strong contrast against its background, it becomes challenging or even impossible for them to read. Moreover, users relying solely on keyboard navigation or screen readers face obstacles in opening menus, restricting their ability to move beyond a website's homepage and explore the wealth of information it offers. These concerns highlight the pressing need for improvements in web accessibility within the Education sector.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- Videos without captions, and no text alternative

- Navigation menu inaccessible using keyboard

- No 'skip to content' links

- Images with no alternative text

- Low colour-contrast ratio

- Focus order issues

- Issues when the zoom is at 200%

- Carousels that move automatically or are skipped in reading order

- Missing lang attribute

- Confusing heading structure

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- Images without descriptive alt text, or with no alt text

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

Accessibility Statement

- 29 educational institutions (74.4%) had no accessibility statement on their website.

- Five institutions (12.8%: Maynooth University, Munster Technological University, Royal College of Surgeons, and University of Galway) had an accessibility statement but referenced an outdated standard.

- Five (12.8%) referenced the current WCAG 2.1 AA standard (Dublin City University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Mary Immaculate College, Royal Irish Academy, University College Dublin, and University of Limerick).

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Education Institutions Accessibility Statements

- Yes - correct standard
- Yes - outdated standard
- No

13%
13%
74%
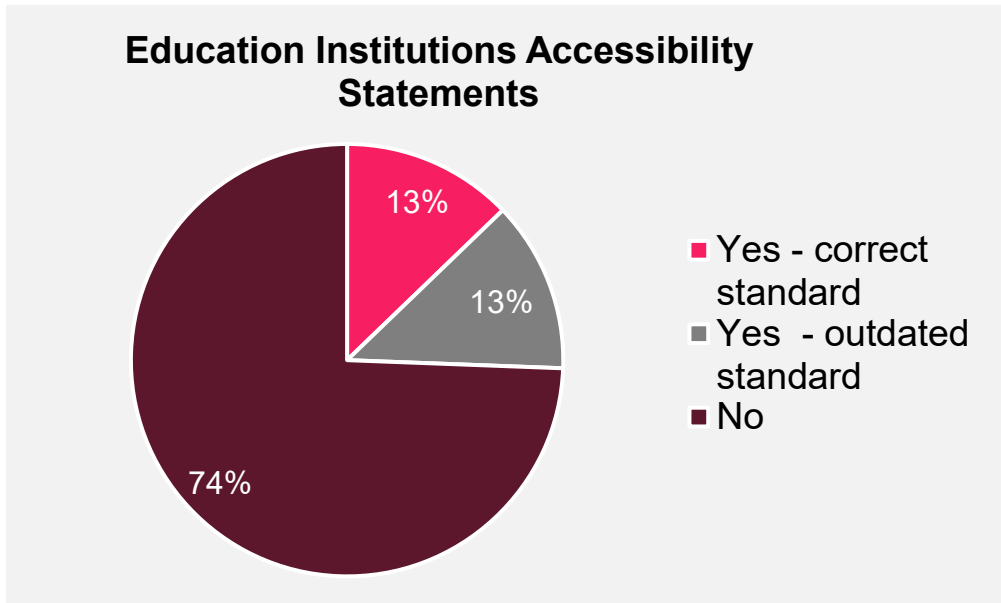
Figure 40: Education Websites Accessibility Statements

Hospitals

Hospitals

Much like the education sector, the healthcare industry, particularly hospitals, holds a vital place in our society. Access to information regarding the services hospitals offer is of paramount importance, especially for individuals with disabilities. To conduct this study, we selected Irish hospitals based on their global ranking [8]. It's important to note that all ten of the public hospitals examined in this report are obligated to adhere to the 2020 EU Regulations, along with one of the private hospitals, the St. John of God Hospitaller Services [7].

The following are the top 10 public hospitals:

- St Vincent's University Hospital

- St James's Hospital

- Beaumont Hospital

- Mater Misericordiae University Hospital

- Tallaght University Hospital (Adelaide and Meath Hospital, Dublin)

- The National Maternity Hospital

- Rotunda Hospital

- Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital

- Temple Street Children's University Hospital

- National Rehabilitation Hospital

The following are the top 10 private hospitals:

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- Beacon Hospital

- Optilase Laser Eye Clinic

- Blackrock Clinic

- St John of God Hospitaller Services

- Our Lady's Children Hospital Crumlin

- Mater Private Cork

- Hermitage Medical Clinic

- Wellington Eye Clinic

- Galway Clinic

- SIMS International Fertility Clinic

Digital Accessibility

Out of the 20 hospital websites, three (15%) passed; these were Beaumont Hospital, Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin, and SIMS International Fertility Hospital, with an average of 14.3 issues each.

17 hospital websites (85%) failed IA Labs' application of the WCAG 2.1 AA standard, with an average of 31.3 issues each.

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Hospitals Website Accessibility

Figure 41: Digital Accessibility of Hospital Websites

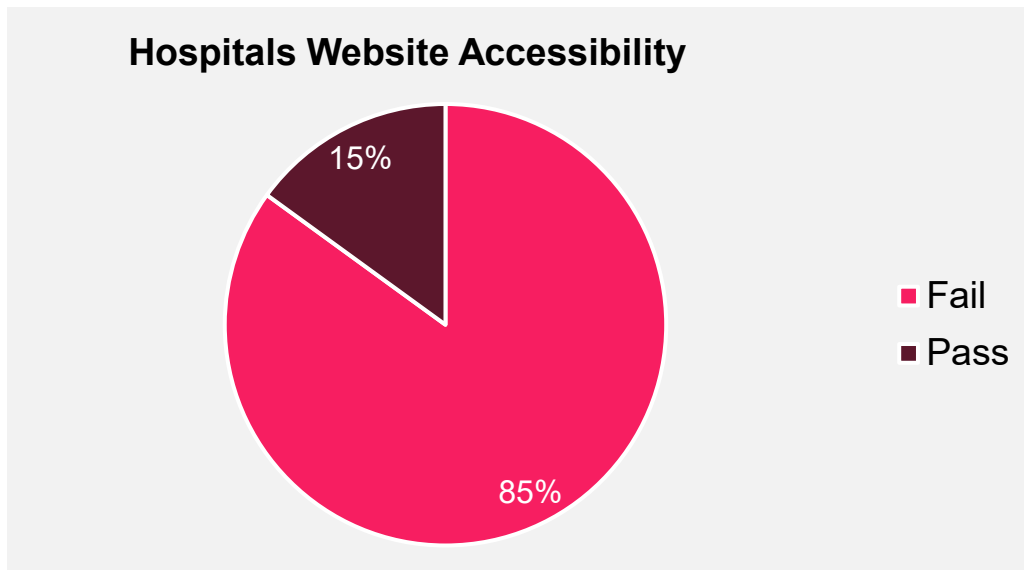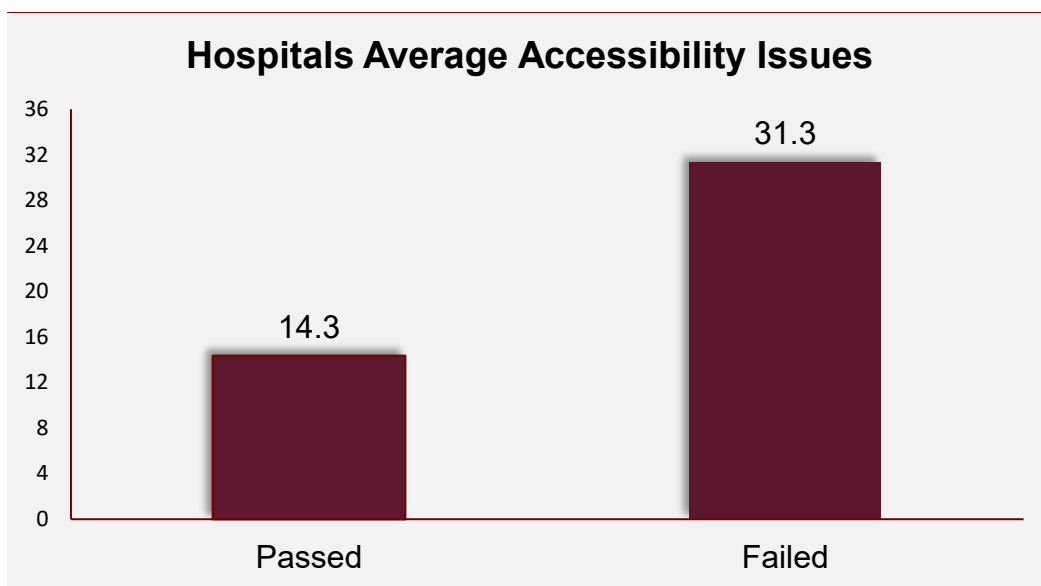**Hospitals Average Accessibility Issues**

Figure 42: Hospital Websites Average Accessibility Issues

Within the hospital sector, there are two pivotal concerns that demand attention: low colour contrast and incorrect focus order. The utilisation of

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light-coloured text on backgrounds with similar shades, as well as dark-coloured text on equally dark backgrounds, results in insufficient contrast. This poses challenges for individuals with low vision, colour-blindness, and reading disorders like dyslexia, rendering the text harder to read. Additionally, incorrect focus order can create confusion for assistive technology users and keyboard navigators. Such discrepancies may lead to information being read out of context or in the wrong order. These issues underscore the significance of prioritising accessibility within hospital websites, ensuring that vital information can be comprehended seamlessly by all individuals.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- Inaccessible navigation menus

- Focus issues

- Low colour contrast ratios

- Images without alt text

- Heading-level structure issues

- Videos playing automatically

- Carousels moving automatically

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

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Accessibility Statement

- 12 hospital websites (60%) had no accessibility statement.

- Seven hospitals (35%: St James's Hospital, Beaumont Hospital, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Tallaght University Hospital, Children's University Hospital, National Rehabilitation Hospital, and Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin) had an accessibility statement but referenced an incorrect standard or no standard.

- One website (5%: St Vincent's University Hospital) had a statement and referenced the correct WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

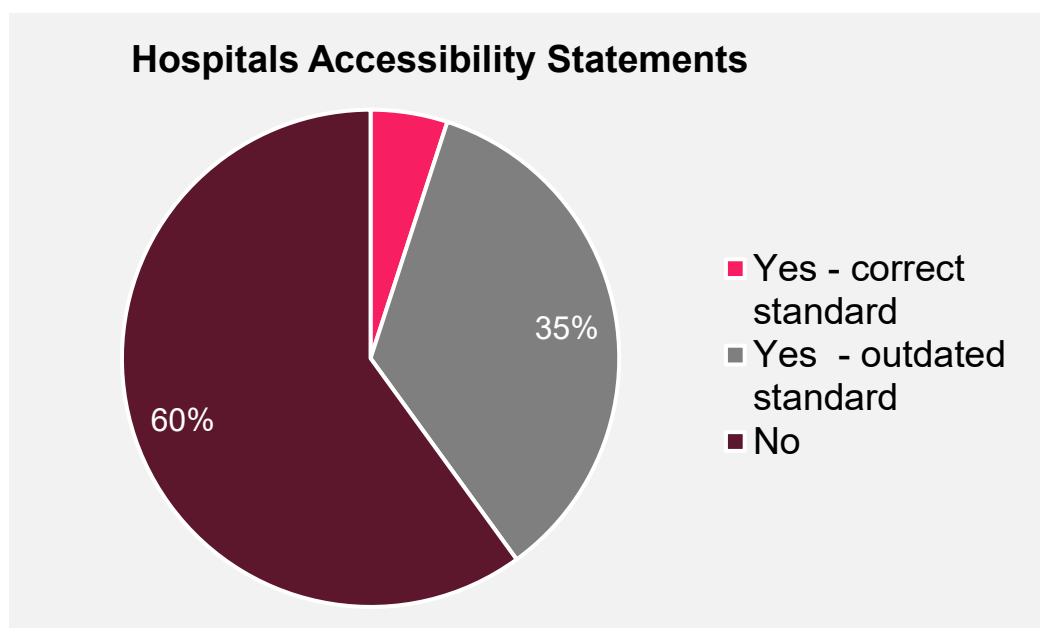*Figure 43: Hospital Websites Accessibility Statements*

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Housing

Housing

Concluding our report, we shift our attention to the websites of the prominent real estate and housing associations in Ireland [9] [10]. In today's digital age, the ability to search for housing options online is as equally vital as ensuring equitable access to housing itself. Regrettably, individuals with disabilities might be unable to fully capitalise on these opportunities if housing websites remain inaccessible to them.

Although the companies and associations behind these websites are not currently mandated to adhere to the digital accessibility standards outlined in the 2020 EU Regulations, the implementation of such standards would significantly enhance the experiences of those who rely on these platforms. By embracing accessibility measures, these entities can ensure that their websites become inclusive hubs where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can seamlessly explore housing options and participate in this crucial aspect of modern living.

The following Real Estate Websites were audited:

- Daft
- My Home
- Rent
- Sherry Fitzgerald

The following Housing Body Websites were audited:

- Clúid

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- Respond
- Tuath
- Oaklee Housing
- Circle Voluntary Housing Association
- Cooperative Housing Association

Digital Accessibility

Out of the 10 websites, two (20%) passed; these were Oaklee Housing and Circle Voluntary Housing Association, with ten and two issues respectively.

Eight websites (80%) failed IA Labs' application of the WCAG 2.1 AA standard and had an average of 45.5 issues each.

Housing Average Accessibility Issues

A bar chart showing two bars. The "Passed" bar reaches 6, and the "Failed" bar reaches 45.5. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 48 in increments of 4.
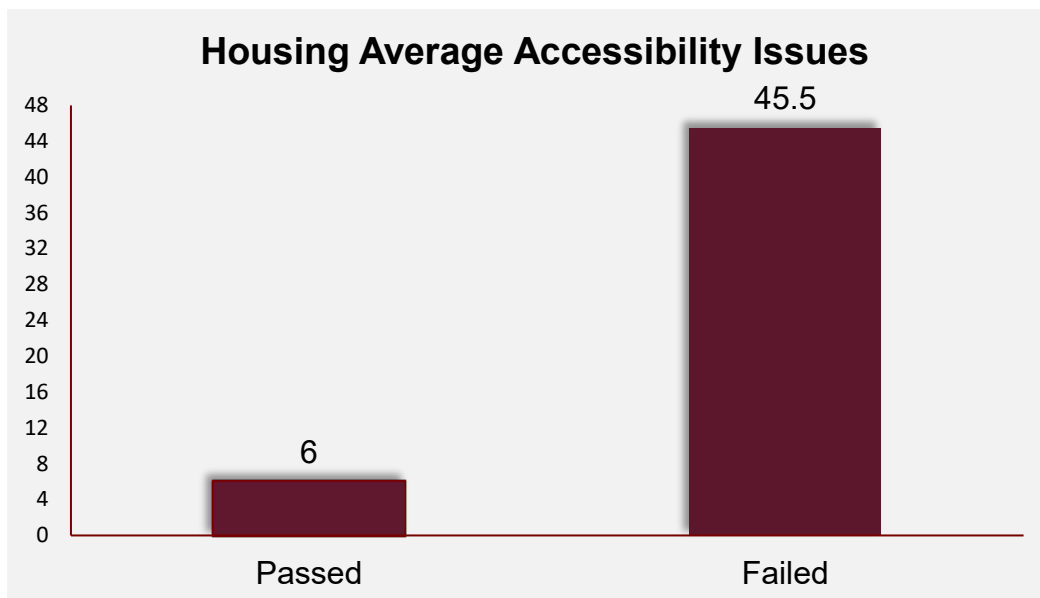
Figure 44: Housing Websites Average Accessibility Issues

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The housing industry faces a significant challenge in the form of automatically moving carousels of content. The inclusion of auto-scrolling and auto-updating elements in websites introduces usability issues, particularly impacting users with cognitive and learning disabilities. These features can lead to disorientation and confusion for such users. Additionally, individuals who rely on assistive technology and keyboard navigation encounter obstacles when navigating through these carousels. In some cases, they might become trapped within this content, unable to proceed to the remaining sections of the website. Addressing this issue is pivotal for enhancing the accessibility of housing websites, ensuring a seamless and inclusive experience for all users, regardless of their abilities.

Several other noteworthy issues surfaced:

- No skip-to-content links

- Lack of labels

- Carousels moving automatically

- Incorrect or confusing focus order

- Images of text

- Videos with no captions and no text alternative

- No option to expand navigation submenus

Each of these factors collectively contributes to the challenge of creating an inclusive digital experience within this industry sector.

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Accessibility Statement

- Seven websites (70%) had no accessibility statement.

- Two websites (20%: Sherry Fitzgerald and Oaklee Housing) had an accessibility statement but referenced no standard.

- One website (10%: Circle Voluntary Housing Association) had an accessibility statement and referenced the correct WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

Housing Accessibility Statements
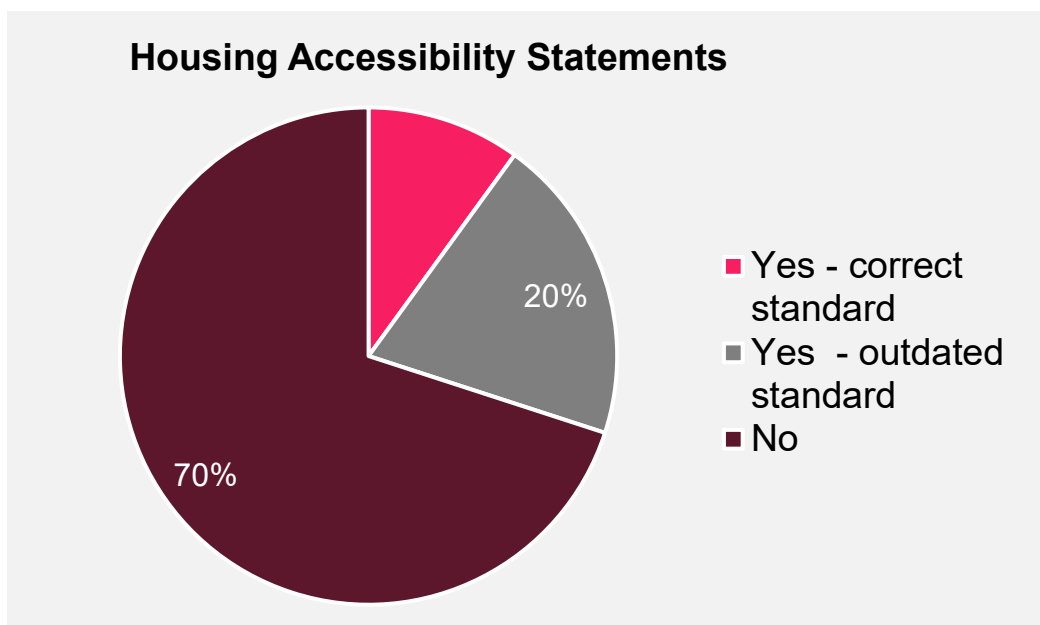
Figure 45: Housing Websites Accessibility Statements

Conclusions

Conclusion

Change begins with awareness. This report serves as a call to action, shedding light on the daily challenges individuals with disabilities encounter while navigating websites, apps, and digital platforms.

Each day, we connect with friends, work remotely, learn, train, search for jobs, and engage online. However, for one in five Irish individuals living with disabilities, this opportunity remains elusive due to the lack of digital accessibility in the websites, apps, and digital experiences we rely on daily.

IA Labs undertook a comprehensive examination of both the private industry and the public sector, utilising a standardised testing process to assess the accessibility of numerous websites, apps, and digital interfaces. The findings from IA Labs are a mixed bag. 27% of the top 100 Irish companies as listed by the Irish Times have taken steps to improve website accessibility despite not being legally obligated to do so, but there remains substantial room for further enhancement.

The analysis of Ireland's top real estate and housing association websites reveals that nearly all but two failed the digital accessibility tests conducted by IA Labs. Similarly, among the 20 leading public and private hospitals in our healthcare system, only three websites passed the accessibility test outlined by this report. Within our education system, which encompasses 39 websites from leading universities and secondary schools, nearly all universities except for four failed the digital

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accessibility assessment. Though there have been improvements across these sectors over the past two years, progress has been gradual.

This body of work underscores the tangible obstacles that people with disabilities encounter when attempting to access websites, apps, and technology for critical tasks such as education, housing, healthcare, and grocery shopping.

Only three of the political party websites in Dáil Éireann met IA Labs' digital accessibility standards. Although this marks an improvement from 2021 when no political party passed the accessibility test, it emphasises the need for leadership from our political parties in championing digital accessibility.

While significant strides have been taken in the realm of digital accessibility over the last five years, there remains much work to be done. Organisations are continuously taking incremental yet tangible steps to enhance the accessibility of their technology. IA Labs has committed to an annual publication of the Digital Accessibility Index, reiterating the importance of awareness. This is the first step, with implementation serving as the subsequent phase in our journey toward establishing a genuinely inclusive digital future for all in Ireland.

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Appendix

Appendix

Definition of Disability – by the National Disability Authority

Different definitions of disability are used in different contexts, for example, to set eligibility for particular services or to outlaw discrimination on grounds of disability. There is no definitive list of conditions that constitute a disability. Any such list could leave out people with significant but rare conditions. Many differences exist in terms of how individuals with a particular condition are affected, ranging from mild to severe difficulties. A person's environment, which includes the support they have and the physical or social barriers they face, influences the scale of the challenges they face in everyday life.

The <u>Disability Act 2005</u> has set out the following definition:
'disability', in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

The **Equality Acts** (Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts), which outlaw discrimination on grounds of disability, use a wider definition and cover past as well as current disability:

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'Disability means:

(a) the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body;

(b) the presence, in the body, of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness;

(c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body;

(d) a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction; or

(e) a condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.'

Census 2022 and other official surveys have used the following definition of disability:

A person with one or more of the following long-lasting conditions or difficulties:

- Blindness or a severe vision impairment

- Deafness or a severe hearing impairment

- An intellectual disability

- A difficulty with learning, remembering or concentrating

- A difficulty with basic physical activities

- A psychological or emotional condition

- A difficulty with pain, breathing, or any other chronic illness or condition

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Dates on which the websites were tested

The dates are stated in the DD/MM/YYYY format.

Political Parties

Index	Political Parties	Date of Audit
1	Fianna Fáil	18/04/2023
2	Fine Gael	18/04/2023
3	Sinn Féin	18/04/2023
4	Labour Party	18/04/2023
5	Green Party	19/04/2023
6	Social Democrats	19/04/2023
7	People Before Profit	19/04/2023
8	Aontú	19/04/2023

Top 100 Companies

Rank	Top 100 Companies	Date of Audit
1	Apple Ireland	03/02/2023
2	Google	29/06/2023
3	Microsoft	03/02/2023
4	Meta Ireland	03/02/2023
5	CRH	03/02/2023
6	Medtronic plc	29/06/2023
7	DCC	03/02/2023

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8	Johnson Controls	03/02/2023
9	Eaton Corp	03/10/2023
10	Dell Ireland	03/10/2023
11	Trane Technologies	03/10/2023
12	MSD	03/10/2023
13	Smurfit Kappa	03/10/2023
14	Pfizer	03/10/2023
15	Oracle	14/06/2023
16	Kerry Group	14/06/2023
17	Flutter	14/06/2023
18	Ardagh Glass Sales	14/06/2023
19	Kingspan	14/06/2023
20	Total Produce	14/06/2023
21	ESB	14/06/2023
22	Kingston	19/06/2023
23	Ryanair	14/06/2023
24	VM Ware	14/06/2023
25	Adobe	14/06/2023
26	Gilead Science	19/06/2023
27	Musgraves	19/06/2023
28	Icon plc	19/06/2023
29	Experian	19/06/2023
30	Glanbia	19/06/2023
31	Dunnes Stores Ireland	19/06/2023

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32	Sandisk	19/06/2023
33	Peninsula Petroleum	19/06/2023
34	ABP Food Group	19/06/2023
35	Analog Devices	19/06/2023
36	Regeneron Ireland	19/06/2023
37	Perrigo	20/06/2023
38	Penneys	20/06/2023
39	Microchip Technology	20/06/2023
40	Boston Scientific	20/06/2023
41	Intel Ireland	20/06/2023
42	Tesco	20/06/2023
43	Salesforce	20/06/2023
44	Jazz Pharmaceuticals	20/06/2023
45	Circle K Ireland Energy Group Ltd	29/06/2023
46	LinkedIn	20/06/2023
47	Amazon Data Services	29/06/2023
48	Takeda	20/06/2023
49	Ornua	20/06/2023
50	Applegreen	21/06/2023
51	Grafton	21/06/2023
52	Abbvie	21/06/2023
53	Alexion Pharmaceuticals	21/06/2023
54	Lidl	21/06/2023
55	Dawn Meats	21/06/2023

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56	Aldi	21/06/2023
57	Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals	21/06/2023
58	Uniphar	21/06/2023
59	BD	21/06/2023
60	Kellogg Ireland	22/10/2023
61	Exyte Northern Europe Limited	23/06/2023
62	Horizon Therapeutics	23/06/2023
63	Maxim Integrated Products	23/06/2023
64	Abbott Ireland	23/06/2023
65	BWG Group	23/06/2023
66	Origin Enterprise Plc	23/06/2023
67	Moy Park	23/06/2023
68	Eli Lilly	23/06/2023
69	Sisk Group	26/06/2023
70	Mercury Engineering	26/06/2023
71	Kepak	26/06/2023
72	Glen Dimplex	26/06/2023
73	Greencore	26/06/2023
74	Diageo	26/06/2023
75	Boylesports	26/06/2023
76	Dunbia	26/06/2023
77	Sandvik	26/06/2023
78	Valero Energy Corporation	26/06/2023
79	Sanofi Genzyme	27/06/2023

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80	NCR	27/06/2023
81	Eircom	27/06/2023
82	Dairygold	27/06/2023
83	Henderson Group	27/06/2023
84	Biomarin	27/06/2023
85	Air BnB	28/06/2023
86	Tullow Oil	27/06/2023
87	Stripe	28/06/2023
88	HP Ireland	28/06/2023
89	Lakeland Dairies	28/06/2023
90	Twitter	28/06/2023
91	Uisce Eireann	28/06/2023
92	Alere International	28/06/2023
93	C&C	28/06/2023
94	Valeo Foods	28/06/2023
95	PHC International	28/06/2023
96	Top Oil	28/06/2023
97	Graham	29/06/2023
98	Energia	29/06/2023
99	Energia Group	29/06/2023
100	Vodafone	29/06/2023

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Education

Index	Institute	Date of Audit
	University	
1	Atlantic Technological University	10/03/2023
2	Dublin City University	10/03/2023
3	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design & Technology	10/03/2023
4	Dundalk Institute of Technology	10/03/2023
5	Mary Immaculate College	10/03/2023
6	Maynooth University	10/03/2023
7	Munster Technological University	10/03/2023
8	National College of Art & Design	10/03/2023
9	RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences	10/03/2023
10	Royal Irish Academy	10/03/2023
11	South East Technological University	10/03/2023
12	St Angela's College	10/03/2023
13	Technological University Dublin	10/03/2023
14	Technological University Shannon: Midlands Midwest	10/03/2023
15	Trinity College Dublin	10/03/2023
16	University College Cork	10/03/2023
17	University College Dublin	10/03/2023
18	University of Galway	10/03/2023

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19	University of Limerick	10/03/2023
	Private Secondary School	
1	Blackrock College	10/07/2023
2	Gonzaga College	10/07/2023
3	Loreto College – St. Stephens Green	11/07/2023
4	Scoil Mhuire	11/07/2023
5	Mount Anville	11/07/2023
6	The Teresian School	11/07/2023
7	St. Gerard's	11/07/2023
8	Loreto High School Beaufort	11/07/2023
9	St. Michael's College	11/07/2023
10	St. Killian's Deutsche Schile	11/07/2023
	Public Secondary School	
1	Colaiste Iosogain	11/07/2023
2	Laurel High Colaiste FCJ	11/07/2023
3	Holy Faith Secondary School	12/07/2023
4	Muckross Park College	12/07/2023
5	Salerno Jesus and Mary Secondary School	12/07/2023
6	Gaelcholaiste Reachrann	12/07/2023
7	Colaiste na Coiribe	12/07/2023
8	Colaiste Naomh Mhuire	12/07/2023
9	Colaiste Iognaid SJ	12/07/2023
10	Mount Mercy College	12/07/2023

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Hospitals

Index	Hospital	Date of Audit
	Public Hospital	
1	St Vincents University Hospital	10/03/2023
2	St James Hospital	10/03/2023
3	Beaumont Hospital	10/03/2023
4	Mater Misericordiae University Hospital	10/03/2023
5	Adelaide and Meath Hospital National Children's Hospital	10/03/2023
6	National Maternity Hospital	10/03/2023
7	Rotunda Hospital	10/03/2023
8	Coombe Women and Infants Hospital	10/03/2023
9	Children's University Hospital	10/03/2023
10	National Rehabilitation Hospital	10/03/2023
	Private Hospital	
1	Beacon Hospital	10/03/2023
2	Optilase Laser Eye Clinic	10/03/2023
3	Blackrock Clinic Dublin	10/03/2023
4	St John of God Hospitaller Services	10/03/2023
5	Mater Private Cork (Shanakiel Hospital)	10/03/2023
6	Hermitage Medical Clinic	10/03/2023
7	Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin	10/03/2023

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8	Wellington Eye Clinic	10/03/2023
9	Galway Clinic	10/03/2023
10	SIMS International Fertility Clinic	10/03/2023

Housing

Index	Housing	Date of Audit
	Real Estate	
1	Daft	13/06/2023
2	My Home	13/06/2023
3	Sherry Fitzgerald	13/06/2023
4	Rent	13/06/2023
	Housing Associations	
1	Clúid	13/06/2023
2	Respond	13/06/2023
3	Tuath	13/06/2023
4	Oaklee Housing	14/06/2023
5	Circle VHA	14/06/2023
6	Cooperative	14/06/2023

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