

Why you should make your website accessible

The internet is an essential part of everyday life. Roughly 36 million people in Canada – more than 94 per cent of our population – have access to the internet¹ and use it every day to access important services, products, and information.

- **Almost 1 in 4 people in Ontario has a disability.** That's more than 2.6 million Ontarians².
- **More than 40 per cent of this population is over the age of 65.** As our population ages, this number will continue to grow.

An accessible website isn't just good for business. It's also the law in Ontario

Organizations that are accessible and inclusive help create smoother connections to services/products and are more likely to attract new business. If your website content is not accessible, you may be losing potential customers and missing out on clients who need your services.

The [law](https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-accessibility-laws) (ontario.ca/page/about-accessibility-laws) in Ontario requires that websites for government and public organizations as well as private organizations with 50 or more employees are accessible.

An accessible website is good for your organization

Businesses and service providers can find many benefits when they make their websites, applications and tools accessible, including:

1. **Improving your clients' online experience:** the more accessible your products and services are online, the more available they are for everyone, whether they have a disability or not. Consumers expect easy-to-use websites and services. Accessible websites can increase customer loyalty and traffic.
2. **Attracting new visitors to your website:** the number of older adults and people with disabilities is large and growing. Organizations that recognize this can extend their market reach by providing accessible online products and services for people with disabilities and older adults.
3. **Retaining and attracting skilled employees:** [employing people with disabilities](https://ontario.ca/page/hire-people-disabilities) (ontario.ca/page/hire-people-disabilities) can help create a more diverse workforce and open the door to a larger pool of untapped skilled candidates. This can help fill the labour shortage gap.
4. **Enhancing your brand:** an accessible website shows your commitment to corporate social responsibility. It sends a strong message that your organization is open for all. Organizations that understand and act on the diverse needs of their employees and clients can benefit from a positive brand reputation.

Does your website work for everyone?

People with disabilities navigate the web and take in web content in various ways. An accessible website considers that:

- people with **vision loss** or **low vision** may need to use accessibility tools like screen readers that turn text and images into speech, Braille or navigable audiobooks
- people with **hearing loss** often rely on audio descriptions like captioning or transcripts
- people with **developmental and learning disabilities** need websites that are clear and well organized.

Accessible websites benefit everyone. For example, websites that allow users to select text size not only helps people with low vision but also helps people reading on the small screen of a mobile device. Adding captions to a video can help people with hearing loss understand the dialogue but can also help people watching programs in a noisy environment.

Website requirements for organizations

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) [Section 14](#) (ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191#BK14), there are specific web requirements for website accessibility which apply to:

- designated public sector organizations
- the Ontario government and Legislative Assembly
- businesses and non-profit organizations with 50 or more employees.

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20) ([w3.org/TR/WCAG20](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20)) is the internationally accepted standard for web accessibility developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

The goal of website accessibility is to ensure that everyone, including people with disabilities, can easily use your website to get all the information and services they need.

Common web accessibility issues

Review your website on a regular basis to identify and correct issues. For example, test these common features often to make sure they can be accessed by all users:

- **navigation features**, such as menus and using proper heading structures, that will help users find content and determine where they are
- **website content**
 - is the text easy to read and written in plain language so that it is easy to understand?
 - are the hyperlinks intuitive and descriptive? Phrases such as 'click here', 'more' or 'click for details' are too ambiguous and should be avoided.

- **colour contrast**
 - is there enough contrast between the text and its background so that it can be read by people with moderately low vision? Use a contrast checker to ensure your text passes WCAG requirements.
 - **text alternatives**
 - do the images have alternative text (ALT) descriptions for people using screen readers?
 - have you included closed captioning, transcripts or audio descriptions for multimedia content?
 - **customer service**
 - do people have options to contact you or provide feedback? For example, have you included a phone or teletypewriter (TTY) number or an email address?
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Find more information about:

- [Tips for testing websites for accessibility](https://ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible#tips-for-testing)
(ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible#tips-for-testing)
- [Tips for working with web developers](https://ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible#web-developers)
(ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible#web-developers)
- [Common web terms](https://ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible#terms)
(ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible#terms)
- [Web accessibility barriers that people with disabilities face](https://www.w3.org/WAI/people-use-web/abilities-barriers)
(https://www.w3.org/WAI/people-use-web/abilities-barriers)

¹ Statistics Canada (2021), Access to the Internet in Canada

² Statistics Canada (2017), Canadian Survey on Disability