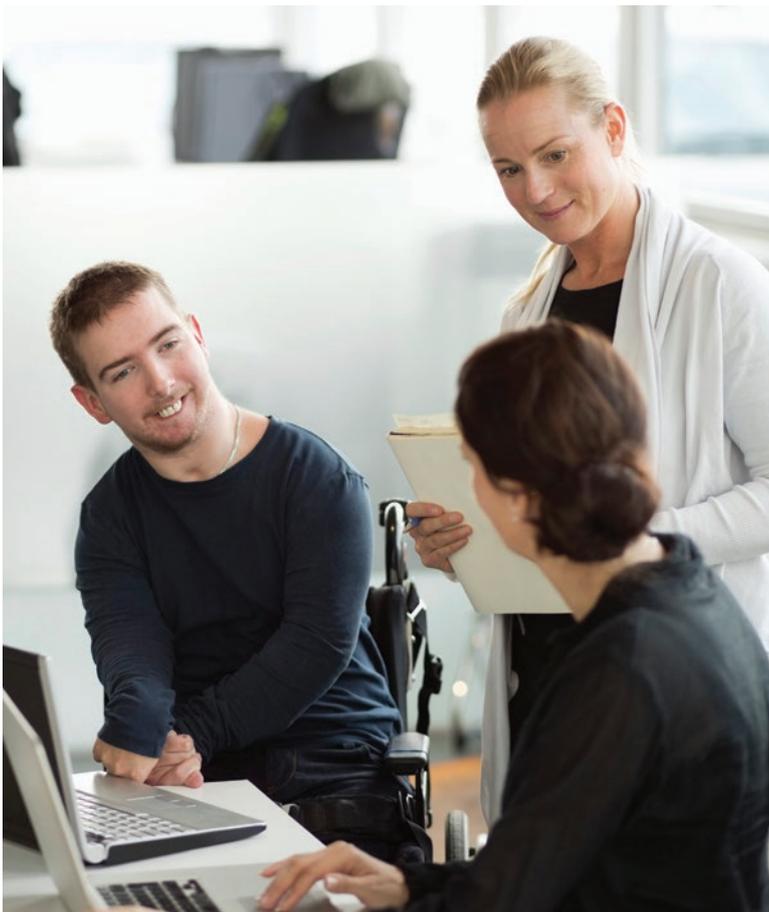


IET Disability in Engineering and Technology Report

Highlighting barriers to creating an accessible working environment for disabled people

This research explores the lived experiences of disabled engineers and technologists and those who support and work with them, identifying barriers and enablers to inclusion, and recommends actions to achieve systemic change. Following on from our [research into neurodiversity in the sector](#), this project focused solely on physical disabilities and long-term conditions.



Key findings

- **Underrepresentation:**
Disabled people make up 24% of the UK working-age population, but only 14% of engineers and 6% of technologists.
- **Employment gap:**
The employment rate for disabled people is 53%, compared to 82% for non-disabled people. Closing this gap could boost the UK economy by £17bn annually.
- **Accountability:**
Workplace inclusion issues arise often not from a lack of information, but a lack of clear accountability and consistent implementation.
- **Human rights:**
The human rights of disabled people often fall below profits in terms of priorities for engineering and technology organisations. One participant said disability inclusion is "not a number that can be quantified and therefore it's not a priority for companies."
- **Impact:**
Disabled engineers and technologists face a "disability tax": extra emotional and time burden required to navigate inaccessible workplace and societal systems.

For more information and to explore the full report please visit theiet.org/disability-in-engineering-and-technology



Actions for Change

- **Employers**
Embed an accessible-by-default approach, invest in and encourage inclusive leadership, and collaborate across the sector to find and share solutions.
- **HR**
Standardise and simplify adjustment processes, work with EDI teams and ERGs to integrate accessibility in systems, train managers in empathy and listening skills, and reinforce clear accountability.
- **Line Managers**
Model empathy, initiate early conversations around needs, and frame adjustments as fairness to wider team members.
- **Disabled people**
Prioritise self-care and listening to your body, review adjustments regularly, and get involved with co-designing inclusive systems.
- **The IET**
Set sector standards on accessibility, amplify visibility of disabled engineers and technologists, recognise and highlight good practice, and advocate for policy change that grows inclusion.

Enablers to disability inclusion

“ They had all my access requirements discussed before I started. Everything was in place, my software was set up... ”

- **Supportive managers:**
Managers are critical to the level and type of support an individual receives, but they don't need to have all the answers. Empathy and willingness to listen matter more than technical knowledge of disabilities.
- **Psychological safety:**
The ability to safely disclose a disability without stigma enables better access to support.
- **Flexibility:**
Adaptable hours, location, and workload all contribute to accessibility for disabled colleagues.
- **Technology:**
Accessible systems and assistive technology tools can play a significant role in disability inclusion, and they're rapidly developing.
- **Peer networks:**
Community spaces like Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) provide a sense of belonging and a place for advocacy and action.
- **Recognition:**
Inclusive and accessible appraisal systems and career progression that focuses on skills and aptitude, not physical abilities.

Barriers to disability inclusion

“ ...if you need accommodations, why are you here? It really feels like that's the attitude and it's so frustrating sometimes. ”

- Complex, inconsistent adjustment processes that are timely and difficult to navigate.
- Ableist bias and stereotypes around disability, for example, assumptions that they cannot do certain things.
- Inaccessible physical and digital environments designed without disabled people involved or in mind.
- Lack of accountability and resources. One participant said

“ for me, the biggest barrier is I'm expected to know what the solution is and I don't. ”
- Manager variability and fear of "getting it wrong." One participant described manager allocation as a "postcode lottery"
 - some are brilliant, others are unsure or dismissive.
- Few disabled role models in leadership due to lower progression.
- Recruitment processes not designed for accessibility.



To explore the full report and for more details on what you can do to make a difference, go to theiet.org/disability-in-engineering-and-technology

@TheIET     IET EngX®
theiet.org