



## Disability Inclusion at Work 2024: A Global Outlook podcast with Emma Codd

**VO:** This audio interview is part of Deloitte's Disability Inclusion at Work: A Global Outlook survey report for 2024. It is produced by FT Longitude for Deloitte.

**Hannah Freegard:** What does true disability inclusion look like in today's workplace?

While conversations around diversity and inclusion are increasingly prevalent, disability remains a facet that is frequently sidelined. Deloitte is shedding light on this often overlooked topic with its first report focused exclusively on disability inclusion at work. It tackles the harsh reality of accessibility at work in 2024.

Here today to discuss the findings is Emma Codd, Deloitte Global's Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer. Hi Emma, Welcome to the studio. The question I'd like to begin with is really, kind of a broader one about the Inclusion at work research. So we know that the topic of workplace inclusion is really well established for Deloitte through the annual Women at Work Research, but this is the first report that focuses exclusively on disability inclusion. What surprised you most about the findings?

**Emma Codd:** I think, overall, what surprised me most was the existence of what I like to call an access gap. So I see that as access to opportunity, access to accommodations, workplace accommodations that could enable success, access to events, the things that are really important in the workplace, and access to an inclusive and respectful culture. And then sort of drilling down a little bit there are, there are four themes I think that struck me the most.

So the first one is the theme of and sort of underlying message throughout, about concerns about negative perception. So whether that's concern about disclosing to work, whether that is a concern about requesting workplace accommodations, or concern about reporting when someone's experienced non-inclusive behaviour in the workplace. So that's really the first really, very worrying theme.

The second theme for me is all around workplace accommodations, these are so important to enable success, and yet the research shows that accommodations are more likely to be denied than actually to be given the Okay. And actually the main reason driving that is cost, certainly from the data that we have.

The third theme is exclusion. Exclusion, as I said earlier, exclusion from events like inside the workplace and outside the workplace. And we all know how important those are, to gain access to sponsorship and just to belong and to feel like you belong.

And then finally, it's experience of non-inclusive behaviours. Four in 10 respondents told us in the last 12 months they've experienced non-inclusive behaviours at work, and around half of them, as I said earlier, are concerned about reporting those non-inclusive behaviours.

**Hannah Freegard:** Thanks, Emma. And on that first topic you mentioned there, that first theme around disclosure, the data showed that over a third of respondents who experienced difficulties in physical or cognitive activities don't actually identify as having a disability.

But on the other hand, 88% of respondents said they disclose their condition or difficulty to at least one person at work. So you know, who are they disclosing to and who aren't they disclosing to?

**Emma Codd:** Yeah, I mean, the disclosure rates of our respondents were actually very good. They were very high. It's nine in 10 of our respondents have disclosed their condition to at least, as you say, at least one person in their workplace. Who are they disclosing to? Well most commonly, to someone in HR or their direct supervisor. And the most common routes will be through some sort of HR information system or through some sort of self identification campaign, you know, encouraging people to to disclose.

However, only a third say they've actually disclosed beyond that, so to their peers and their colleagues, people they work with, and often those are people you're spending the most time with, and often those are people that you know, really could be in a position to better enable success. Interestingly, the data shows us that the more senior you are, the more likely you are to disclose, which probably makes sense, but it also shows us that you're more likely to disclose if you are under 25 versus if you are in an older age group.

**Hannah Freegard:** So, the data shows that only a quarter of respondents who disclose their condition actually requested workplace accommodations, and of those that did, around three quarters have had at least one of their requests rejected. What barriers do you think there are that are preventing people from making these requests and seeking the support that they need? Is it a fear of rejection, or are there other factors at play?

**Emma Codd:** Yeah, it's quite a large number of people who have disclosed, who haven't requested accommodations, as you say, and for around four in 10 of those individuals, it's basically because they don't need them, or they believe that they don't need them. But for the rest, 20%, so two in 10 think their employer would actually deny the request. And that's greater for those individuals who are neurodivergent, it's higher than the overall sample.

Two in 10, again, are worried that it would be seen negatively by their supervisor. So it's that same theme, that concern about perception, and negative perception in particular. 18% don't know how to request accommodations. And this is something that you know, we will come on to in the end, when we talk about recommendations. This is something that's really easy to fix, is to make sure that everybody knows the process for requesting.

And then, unfortunately, you've got just over one in 10 who cite negative experiences when they've requested them in the past to other organisations. And so that absolutely is very likely to give you cause for concern with your current employer.

**Hannah Freegard:** And looking at it from a slightly different angle, one of the areas that is maybe focused on less around disability inclusion, is kind of inclusion at workplace events. And we actually found in this research that six in 10 respondents said they've been unable to attend various kinds of work-related events due to accessibility challenges. So you know, the venue may have not been accessible to them, for example. Could you elaborate a little on the most common obstacles that they encountered and what are the wider implications of this exclusion, both for the individuals and for the organisation?

**Emma Codd:** This number was, to me, was utterly shocking. 6,000 people — 6,000 out of 10,000 — said that they have been unable to attend one or more workplace events. And I just, that to me, is just wholly, wholly unacceptable. If you drill down into that slightly more, nearly four in 10 said they couldn't go to an event outside the workplace due to a lack of accessibility with the venue. A third say they couldn't attend one or more events at their workplace, so at their office or the premises they work at due to inaccessibility and just over a quarter say that they couldn't socialise outside the workplace with colleagues for exactly the same reason. So that could be meetings that are being held at an external venue. It could be meetings internally, or, you know, networking events internally, or just some good old socialising and getting to know your colleagues more.

Now in terms that, you asked about the most common obstacles. So the most common obstacles that respondents told us were about were inaccessible restrooms. That was sort of number one, followed by lack of breaks in the agenda. Two in 10 told us that their assistants, their carer or a service animal were not permitted to attend, and the same number said the room or venue was not physically accessible.

And I just want to come back to the impact. So think about how important the events are for all of us. And it's not just when you're at work, but it is for that sort of sense of belonging and sponsorship and spending valuable time with colleagues. So this stuff really matters, and not thinking about accessibility when you're organising a workplace event — I mean, in our workplace, we have very, very detailed guidance about when you are organising an event at another venue, this is what you need to look for, these are things that need to be in place. And that to me, is something that is sort of table stakes. It's so important because at the moment, far too many people are being excluded, frankly, from really important things in the workplace.

**Hannah Freegard:** Absolutely, and that just feels, you know, so thoughtless, really, and it's something that organisations should be addressing as a matter of course.

Looking at one of the areas of the research which strikes me as being incredibly serious, are the findings around microaggressions and harassment. We found that 41% of respondents actually reported experiencing microaggressions, harassment or bullying at work, but only just over half of those who experienced non-inclusive behaviours actually formally reported them to someone in authority within their organisation. What factors do you think are contributing to this under reporting, and what fears or concerns may have prevented those individuals from coming forward?

**Emma Codd:** The non-inclusive behaviours question is something that we ask as standard, and we also ask whether you report it. And then we also, we do want to delve into why not. And it's most frequently microaggressions, so, you know, seemingly small, often unintended, you know, non-inclusive behaviour. And then it's followed by bullying, and then finally, followed by harassment. And then you've got around half who aren't reporting this. And so effectively, what happens is that behaviours will just continue, and they'll continue, and often they will grow into, you know, even more significant behaviours.

In terms of reason for not reporting non-inclusive behaviours, so just over a third worry that reporting the behaviour would result in it getting worse. And if we think about this sort of negative concern about negative consequence, that is really that's, again, that theme running through this. And then just around three and 10 thought their complaint wouldn't be taken seriously. And then just over a quarter thought the behaviour wasn't serious enough to report, and often that's down to workplace culture, you know, down to really a lack of focus on an inclusive culture within a workplace.

**Hannah Freegard:** Now, one aspect of Deloitte's research projects that I just find really valuable is the fact that you make some kind of concrete recommendations around what employers can do to address some of these inclusion challenges.

So based on the findings of the Disability Inclusion at Work research, what concrete actions should employers prioritise to foster inclusive workplace cultures for individuals with disabilities?

**Emma Codd:** I'm a great believer in asking people who have the lived experience, 'What would make your workplace more accessible?' You know, when we asked that question, what are the top things that employers could do to make meaningful progress on disability inclusion, the top answers were, unsurprisingly, given the data that we have, 'Make the workplace more physically accessible'. And again, to me, this is table stake stuff, but clearly it's not happening consistently.

The second one was, 'Make disability inclusion a board level priority'. So this is making it a serious priority where someone is responsible for it, and, you know, and there's a real focus on getting things right.

And then finally, again, possibly not surprising, improving access to workplace accommodations. If you think about what we know about how many are denied versus, you know, accepted, I can see why that's also in the top three.

So those three things are, frankly, we can't argue with those. Those respondents are telling us that these, in their view, are the top things that will aid disability inclusion. But then in terms of the other analysis, what we saw was, well, what else? What else should employers do? And it very much comes down to roles that enable strengths. So giving people roles that really allow them to play to their strengths, and, of course, workplace accommodations which can enable them to enhance those strengths.

The next one is ensuring leaders understand and enable disability inclusion. If you want access to workplace accommodations, your leader is the person that you are most likely to want to talk to about it, and if your leader is not informed and does not understand the benefit of disability inclusion, you know that's not going to make it a very productive conversation, and actually, chances are you are likely not to ask for them.

Next one is embedding accessibility into what I call moments that matter at work. So that's whether it's recruitment, onboarding, but really importantly, it's events. It's the things that are so important, the things that make us really feel like we belong. And so many people are being excluded from those at the moment.

And then finally, this, to me, it's, you know, something that's so critical. It's the foundation for anything, which is an inclusive culture, and one where non-inclusive behaviours just don't happen, but on the odd chance that they do, where people feel really comfortable to report without worrying that the behaviour is going to get worse, without worrying about impact to their career.

**Hannah Freegard:** Thanks, Emma. There's some really kind of solid pieces of advice and recommendations there for organisations who are looking to build more inclusive culture for individuals with disabilities. Really appreciate you taking the time to share the findings of the research with us today.

**VO:** This audio interview is part of Deloitte's Disability Inclusion at Work: A Global Outlook survey report for 2024. It is produced by FT Longitude for Deloitte.



**Emma Codd**  
Global Chief Diversity,  
Equity and Inclusion Officer



Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited (DTTL), its global network of member firms, and their related entities (collectively, the “Deloitte organization”). DTTL (also referred to as “Deloitte Global”) and each of its member firms and related entities are legally separate and independent entities, which cannot obligate or bind each other in respect of third parties. DTTL and each DTTL member firm and related entity is liable only for its own acts and omissions, and not those of each other. DTTL does not provide services to clients. Please see [www.deloitte.com/about](http://www.deloitte.com/about) to learn more.

Deloitte provides industry-leading audit and assurance, tax and legal, consulting, financial advisory, and risk advisory services to nearly 90% of the Fortune Global 500® and thousands of private companies. Our people deliver measurable and lasting results that help reinforce public trust in capital markets, enable clients to transform and thrive, and lead the way toward a stronger economy, a more equitable society, and a sustainable world. Building on its 175-plus year history, Deloitte spans more than 150 countries and territories. Learn how Deloitte’s approximately 457,000 people worldwide make an impact that matters at [www.deloitte.com](http://www.deloitte.com).

This communication contains general information only, and none of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited (DTTL), its global network of member firms or their related entities (collectively, the “Deloitte organization”) is, by means of this communication, rendering professional advice or services. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your finances or your business, you should consult a qualified professional adviser.

No representations, warranties or undertakings (express or implied) are given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information in this communication, and none of DTTL, its member firms, related entities, employees or agents shall be liable or responsible for any loss or damage whatsoever arising directly or indirectly in connection with any person relying on this communication. DTTL and each of its member firms, and their related entities, are legally separate and independent entities.