

# DEI DISABILITY<sup>SM</sup> EQUALITY INDEX

2021

The most comprehensive benchmarking tool  
for disability inclusion in business.

A joint initiative between the American Association  
of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and Disability:IN<sup>®</sup>

Learn more at [www.DisabilityEqualityIndex.org](http://www.DisabilityEqualityIndex.org)



# Executive Summary

A year after COVID-19 brought workplaces and society to a halt, we find ourselves entering a new normal unlike anything we've seen before. The job market is tight, talent is migrating, and more workers are reassessing their jobs.

The number of workers who have seriously considered leaving their current place of work—66%, according to a new Pew Research Center survey—gives workers more leverage than they've had in decades. Prospective candidates have indicated a shift in their priorities: They desire better work-life balance, more inclusive workplaces, and are looking for employers who openly speak up in support of social justice issues.

Against this dynamic backdrop, companies have become more conscious about creating safe and culturally engaged workplaces and are implementing policies that prioritize the needs of their employees.

To speed up the economic recovery and to attract new talent, companies need to be more inclusive of people with disabilities. More than one billion people, or 15% of the global population, are disabled. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 4 Americans have a disability; they are twice as likely to be unemployed than those without disabilities.

In the 2021 Annual Disability Equality Index (DEI) findings, we share the tangible ways participating companies are bringing people with disabilities into this new economy to drive inclusion and equality. This year's DEI included additional questions to reflect areas companies should be focusing on today, such as:

- Innovative technology to advance digital accessibility
- Mental health and wellness benefits
- Paid caregiver leave
- Supplemental long-term disability insurance benefits
- Flexible work options for employees
- Accessible remote and in-person conferencing technologies

The results prove that each year more businesses across industries view the DEI as a valuable tool, with 319 businesses participating in the 2021 Disability Equality Index, compared to 247 in 2020, a 29% increase. Additionally, 67 businesses were Fortune 100 companies, compared to 59 in 2020, a 17% increase.

Companies received a score, on a scale of zero (0) to 100, with those earning 80 and above recognized as a "Best Place to Work for Disability Inclusion." This year, 272 companies earned that distinction.

## Industries with the greatest DEI participation in 2021



**“To make progress in disability inclusion, companies must treat it as a business priority with goals, plans, measurement and accountability. The Disability Equality Index is critical to measuring progress, and in connecting business leaders to best practices and each other as we strive to advance disability inclusion and equality. It has never been more urgent for business to lead change on disability inclusion—and we can only succeed in making progress if we work together.”**

Julie Sweet, President & CEO, Accenture

# Executive Summary

## Leadership Lags Recruitment

The DEI findings show a growing importance placed upon recruitment representation in the workplace, but leadership has room to grow.

- 83% of companies have external recruiting efforts geared specifically to people with disabilities.
- Only 10% of companies have a senior executive who identifies as a person with a disability.

## Accommodations & Benefits Are Differentiators

The findings show that more companies overall are continuing pandemic benefits, which definitely helps workers with disabilities.

- 97% of companies offer flexible work accommodations.
- 91% of businesses are providing a wellness benefit that extends beyond Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) or mental health benefits.

## Companies Should Make It Safer to Self-Disclose

Disclosure empowers workers with disabilities to ask for accommodations and is linked to higher engagement, career satisfaction and performance.

- In 2019, 3.7% of employees at companies that took the DEI disclosed their disability and in 2021 that number grew to 5% on average.

While the 2021 Annual DEI saw progress across many areas, there is much more work to be done even among top-scoring companies. We encourage all companies to read this report and consider participating in the DEI so that they can further their leadership in global disability inclusion and equality for the benefit of their employees, customers, investors, partners and the wider business community.

**“We are so pleased to partner with 319 companies this year on the Disability Equality Index. Part of corporate commitment to disability inclusion is recognizing your stance and using it as an ‘aha moment’ to drive the business investments needed to scale change. Inclusion and accessibility cuts across the enterprise, from cultural representation in the workforce, to technology acceleration, to incorporating supply chain diversity. These are tangible opportunities that leading companies can leverage to create sustainable impact for their business and brand.”**

Jill Houghton, President & CEO, Disability:IN

**“The Disability Equality Index shines a spotlight on companies that believe they have a stake in creating a more equitable society for people with disabilities. It is a conduit for our work championing disability rights for the 60 million Americans with disabilities and knocking down barriers to employment, technology and healthcare, and we’re thrilled to see the progress being made today.”**

Maria Town, President & CEO, AAPD

# 2021 Disability Equality Index Highlights

**319**

businesses participated in the 2021 Disability Equality Index, compared to 247 in 2020, up 29% from last year.

**272**

top-scoring businesses, out of the 319, scored 80% and above.

**77**

businesses participated in the DEI for the first time, compared to 74 in 2020.

**4%**

of new hires self-identified as having a disability in 2021, up from 3.2% in 2019.

**68%**

of businesses have a company-wide external hiring goal(s) for people with disabilities.

**59%**

of businesses have a requirement to ensure digital products are accessible and usable by people with disabilities.

**5%**

of employees self-identified as having a disability in 2021, up from 3.7% in 2019.

**67**

businesses were Fortune 100 companies, compared to 59 in 2020.

**43%**

of companies require prime suppliers to have expenditures with disability-owned businesses.

**47%**

of businesses have a centralized accommodations fund or allow managers to have a “budget margin” with disability accommodations expenses.

**91%**

of businesses are providing wellness benefits that extend beyond EAP or mental health benefits.

**10%**

of businesses have a senior executive who identifies as a person with a disability.

# 2021 Trends and Gaps

## Culture

**86%** of companies have an employee resource group (ERG) specifically for people with disabilities.

BUT

**32%** have yet to implement company-wide hiring goals for people with disabilities.

## Leadership

**96%** of ERGs have a senior executive sponsor.

BUT

Only **10%** of DEI businesses have a senior executive who identifies as a person with a disability.

## Enterprise-Wide Access

**82%** of DEI businesses are committed to ensuring individuals with disabilities can access digital content.

BUT

Only **59%** of participating companies have a requirement to ensure digital products are accessible and usable to employees with disabilities.

## Benefits

**91%** of DEI businesses are providing wellness benefits that extend beyond EAP or mental health benefits.

BUT

Only **23%** of businesses offer information on financial instruments that benefit employees with disabilities.

## Accommodations

**82%** of DEI businesses have a process in place for employees to request accommodations for virtual/off-site company meetings and events.

BUT

Only **47%** of companies surveyed have a centralized accommodations fund. **4%** of companies plan on adding a fund within the coming year.

## Employment, Education, Retention & Advancement

**79%** of businesses have retention and advancement programs focused on or inclusive of employees with disabilities.

BUT

**48%** have a written retention and advancement statement that includes disability.

## Community Engagement

**91%** of DEI businesses supported an external disability related event or organization in 2020.

BUT

**37%** of DEI businesses do not yet have a process in place ensuring all contractors and subcontractors pay their employees at least Local, State, or Federal minimum wage.

## Supplier Diversity

**75%** of companies had expenditures with disability-owned businesses in 2020.

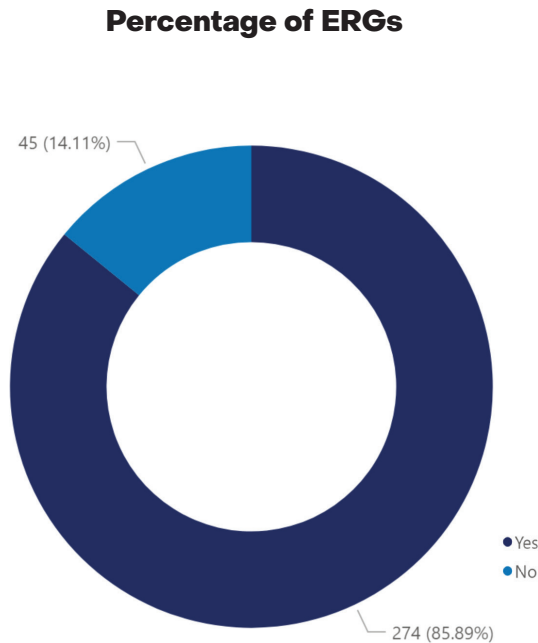
BUT

**43%** require their prime suppliers to have expenditures with disability-owned businesses.

# Highlights By Practice Area

## Culture & Leadership

Nearly 9 out of 10 companies have a disability-focused ERG.



86% of companies have an ERG specifically for people with disabilities.



68% have company wide hiring goals for people with disabilities.

### Best Practice: Bank of America

Bank of America's Hidden Disabilities Series series aims to provide awareness and resources for a variety of hidden disabilities through webinars, courageous conversations, internal articles, and personal story sharing. Examples of topics covered in the series include Mental Health Awareness, Learning Disabilities, Suicide Prevention, PTSD, HIV Awareness and Prevention, and more.

### Best Practice: Raytheon Technologies

Raytheon Technologies launched the #iCount Self-Identification campaign, leveraging videos with employee testimonials, employee blogs, and e-mails from senior leaders to demonstrate the commitment to create an environment where everyone believes that every employee counts. In this campaign, whether or not you have a disability, your choice to disclose a disability status says, "I count." It also sends the message to others that they count, too.

#### Get better at inclusion!

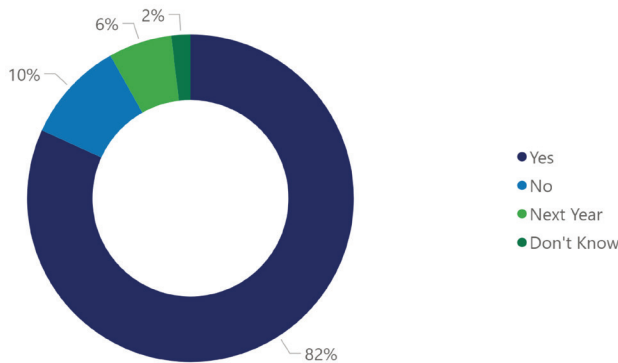
Empower senior executives who have lived experiences with disability to be vocal about prioritizing inclusive policies and initiatives.

# Highlights By Practice Area

## Enterprise-Wide Access

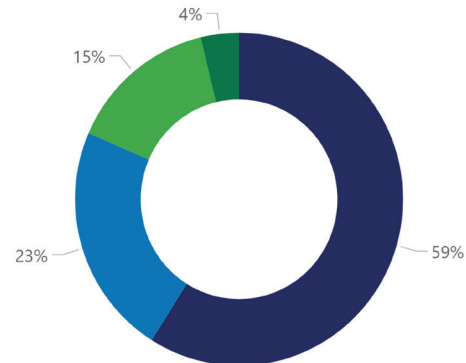
Six out of 10 companies have a requirement to make their digital content accessible and usable to people with disabilities.

**Has your company made any commitments towards ensuring that individuals with disabilities can access digital content?**



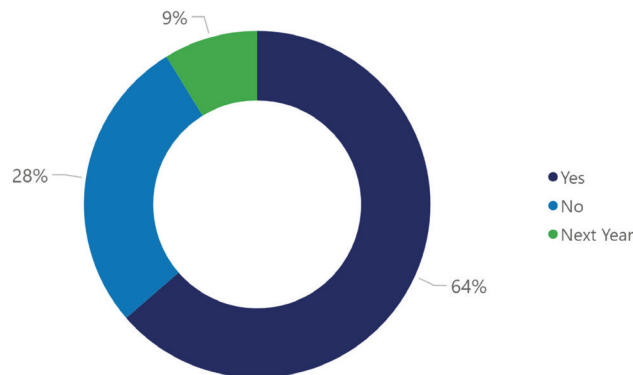
82% of companies are committed to ensuring individuals with disabilities can access digital content.

**Does your business have a requirement to ensure digital products are accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities?**



59% of companies have a requirement to ensure digital products are accessible and usable by employees with disabilities.

**Does your business have an accessibility expert(s) who can resolve accessibility and compatibility issues necessary for employees with disabilities to use internally facing digital products?**



64% of companies have internal or external accessibility experts who can resolve issues for employees with disabilities that use internally facing digital products.

## Best Practice: Visa

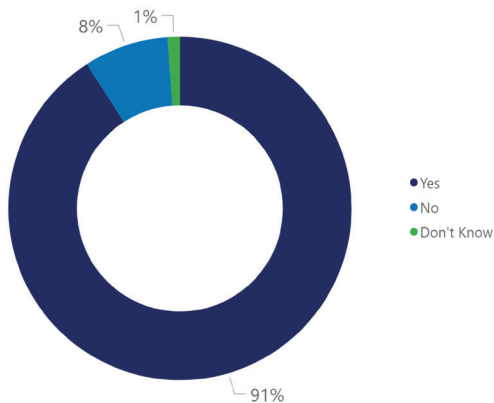
Visa initially saw a barrier to WCAG 2.0 adoption (and therefore progress toward widespread web accessibility) due to the complexity and volume of information in the standard, so they distilled WCAG 2.0 into concrete requirements, tests, code snippets, tools, how-to videos and online training. Visa first made these resources available internally and then released them to the public at <http://developer.visa.com/pages/accessibility>. Visa's Accessibility team maintains and regularly updates the requirements (they currently meet WCAG 2.1 AA) and provides support and consulting to Visa teams making accessible products globally.

# Highlights By Practice Area

## Benefits

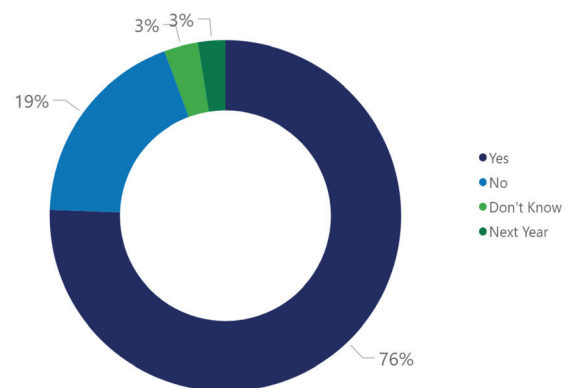
9 out of 10 companies provide wellness benefits such as stress management, 'relief days,' and medical screenings.

### Does your business provide wellness benefits beyond EAP?



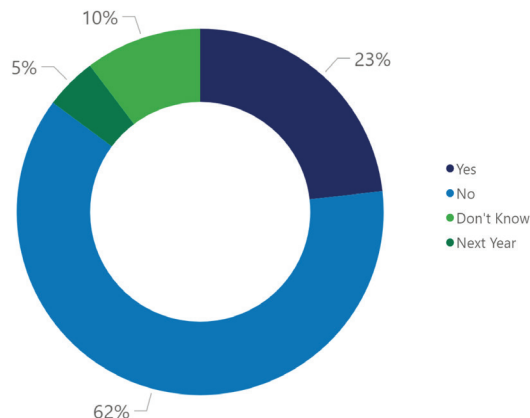
91% of companies are providing a wellness benefit that extends beyond EAP or mental health benefits.

### Does your business offer other mental health benefits beyond Federal requirements?



76% of companies offer other mental health benefits beyond Federal requirements.

### Does your business offer information on financial instruments that benefit people with disabilities?



23% of companies offer information on financial instruments that benefit employees with disabilities. 5% plan to start offering information within the next year.

## Best Practice: Cisco

Cisco provides free access for 90 days to a certified money coach in the United States which helps to address financial pressures, budgeting and understanding income sources that may be due to loss of work due to a disability or chronic illness.

### Get better at inclusion!

Offer paid caregiver leave to employees, which is different from Family Medical Leave Act. It is specific paid time off for caregivers since FMLA is not paid.



# Highlights By Practice Area

## Retention & Advancement

*Inclusion goes beyond hiring to ensure people with disabilities grow and advance their careers.*

- Out of participating companies with written retention and advancement statements, only 48% mention disability.

### Best Practice: Accenture

Accenture launched “Abilities Unleashed,” a global leadership development program for people with disabilities and advocates. The program, the first of its kind and potentially one of few such industry initiatives, makes an effort to bring its people with different kinds of disabilities into a regional program focused on enabling their career progression. Accenture launched the session for the European community in Dublin, Ireland, towards the end of 2019. The program was a tremendous success and provided deep insights into making learning initiatives universal at Accenture.

### Best Practice: EY

EY’s “Neurodiversity@Work” expands opportunities for autistic candidates and employers. The program provides guidance on communicating effectively with autistic colleagues and sharing internal and community tools, resources and supports for EY families impacted by autism. EY also has 80 neurodiverse professionals working in five U.S. Centers and has held nearly a dozen Neurodiversity@Work and @Home events, including one in Manhattan where their global chairman shared his personal story. These events are expanding across the US and are helpful in retention and advancement.

### Best Practice: L’Oreal USA

L’Oreal developed a pilot “Diversity Fellowship Program” that focuses on attracting and engaging with sophomore students that are in underrepresented groups, such as people of color, disabled individuals, veterans and LGBTQ.

### Get better at inclusion!

Offer employees with disabilities candid developmental feedback and give them opportunities to keep their skills current and advance at your company.

**“The DEI helps us take meaningful actions to foster a culture of disability inclusion and equality within Expedia Group ... By consciously eliminating barriers for employees, customers, and partners with disabilities, we are better positioned to power travel for everyone, everywhere.”**

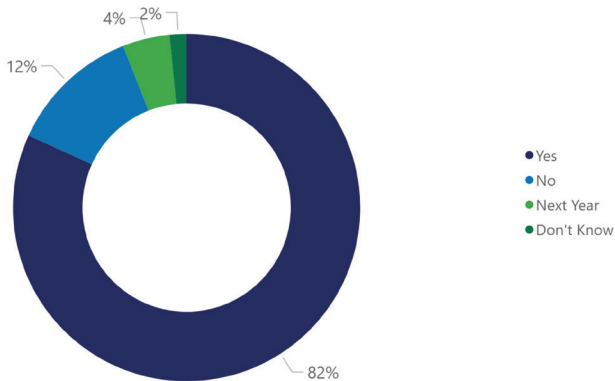
– Michael Davis Velasco, Chief Inclusion Officer, Expedia Group

# Highlights By Practice Area

## Accommodations

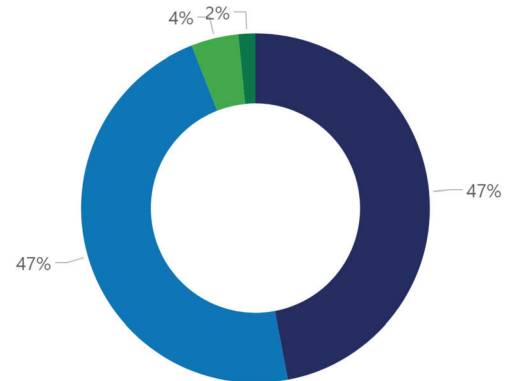
*Fewer than half of companies have a Central Accommodations Fund to either partially or entirely cover reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities.*

**Does your business have a process in place for employees to request disability accommodations for off-site/virtual company meetings or activities?**



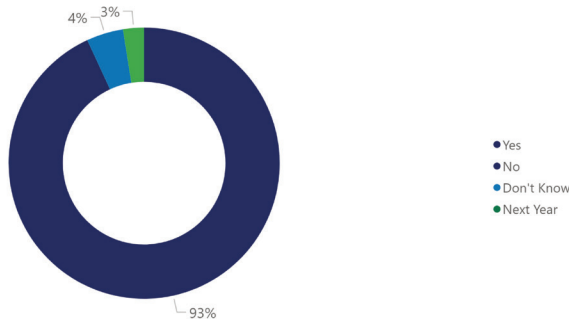
82% of companies have a process in place for employees to request disability accommodations for virtual/off-site company meetings and events.

**Does your business have a centralized accommodations fund?**



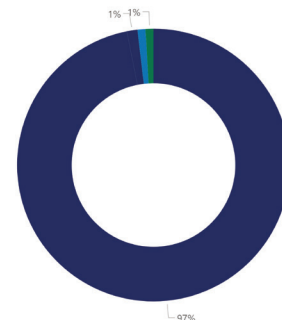
47% of companies have a centralized accommodations fund with 4% of companies adding a fund next year.

**Does your business have a written disability accommodations procedure available to employees?**



93% of companies have written a disability accommodation procedure.

**Do you offer your employees flexible work options?**



97% of respondents offer flexible work accommodations.

## Best Practice: Booz Allen Hamilton

The firm's long-standing practice of covering all accommodation costs through centralized funding has been modeled by other companies as the ideal way to handle workplace accommodations. By doing so, it removes any concerns about cost impact to individual team or department budgets. Examples of costs covered include, but are not limited to, sign language interpreters, drivers, any type of assistive technology, specialized chairs, desks, peripherals, etc. No team or department bears any cost related to workplace accommodations.

### Get better at inclusion!

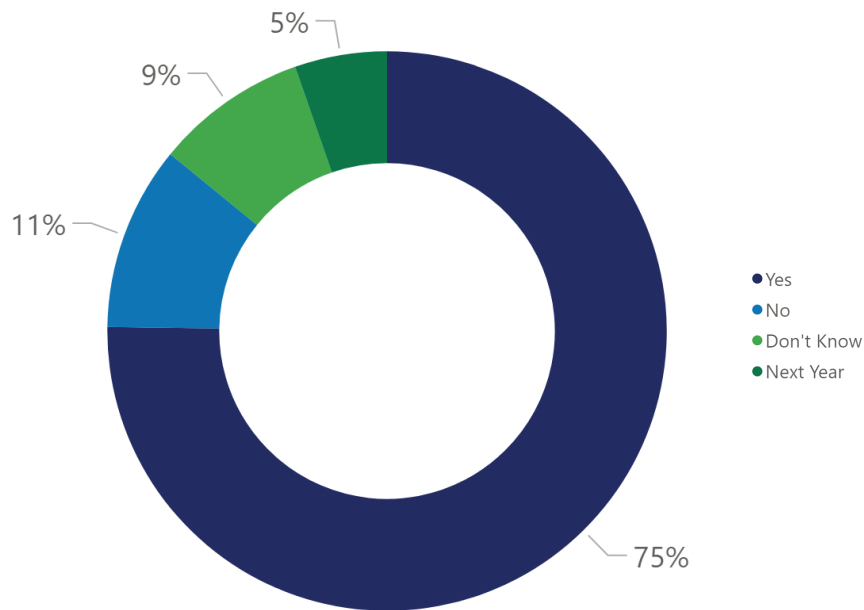
Flexibility is an accommodation that can drive productivity for employees with disabilities, while keeping them engaged and motivated.

# Highlights By Practice Area

## Supplier Diversity

Disability-Owned Business Enterprises (DOBEs™) employ people with disabilities at 6-7 times the rate of business owners without disabilities.

**In 2020, did your business have expenditures with disability-owned businesses?**



75% of companies have done business with a disability-owned business in 2020.

### Best Practice: Merck

Universal Design is an initiative through the Global Workforce Enterprise Services that is creating universally accessible workplaces on Merck sites. Universal Design is ensuring that all Merck employees can comfortably and safely access their workplace; the project has been a collaborative process with a Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE).

### Best Practice: Novant Health

Building off of previous supplier diversity and inclusion commitments, Novant Health and Mechanics and Farmers Bank created the Diverse Supplier Reinvestment Program. The program is committed to growing the capacity of businesses owned by women, ethnic minorities, veterans, LGBTQ individuals and people with disabilities by guaranteeing loans. The maximum loan amount is \$250,000 or 25% of the total value of the contract with Novant Health, whichever is less. Novant Health has partnered with Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College to send businesses that are currently certified as a Novant Health vendor to Dartmouth College to help them learn and build business capacity. Each year Novant Health sponsors up to 2 vendors to attend for free. Furthermore, Supplier Diversity at Novant Health continues to partner with their disability Business Resource Group to provide vendor support and identify more disability inclusion opportunities.

# Methodology

A company's 2021 DEI score is based on their self-reported inclusion practices, policies, and hiring commitment for people with disabilities during calendar year 2020. The DEI participants are investing the time and resources to build inclusive programs and policies across six areas:

- Culture and Leadership
- Enterprise-wide Access
- Employment Practices (e.g. Benefits, Recruitment, Employment, Education, Retention & Advancement, Accommodations)
- Community Engagement
- Supplier Diversity
- Non-U.S. Operations (if applicable)

These companies recognize workers with disabilities as a diverse group that crosses other areas of diversity including age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and religion. DEI participants know that workers with disabilities bring unique perspectives to the table that can help them develop innovative products and services, giving their company a competitive advantage.

A score of 100 does not mean to convey "perfection." AAPD and Disability:IN recognize there is no single best way to practice inclusion, and that some practices may be more effective for some companies or industries than others. A score of 100 on the DEI simply means that a company adheres to many of the numerous leading disability inclusion practices featured in the DEI, but there's still room for improvement.

**"We are honored to be recognized as a top scoring company on the Disability Equality Index, and our hope is that this recognition will inspire other companies to identify, challenge, and remove the barriers that exclude and discriminate against individuals. Our work is far from over – we will continue to identify ways to create a more accessible, welcoming, and inclusive environment in our stores."**

-Dennis Brockman, Senior Vice President, Global Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer, Starbucks

**"A strong DEI score shows our institutional partners, customers, colleagues, and candidates that Fidelity is dedicated to our disability inclusion journey. Even before taking the DEI the first time, the Index helped us decide how to prioritize initiatives to become on par with the top companies for disability inclusion in the US. We still have a long way to go, but we are on the journey and the DEI keeps us on track."**

-Hale Pulsifer, VP Customer Accessibility, Fidelity Investments

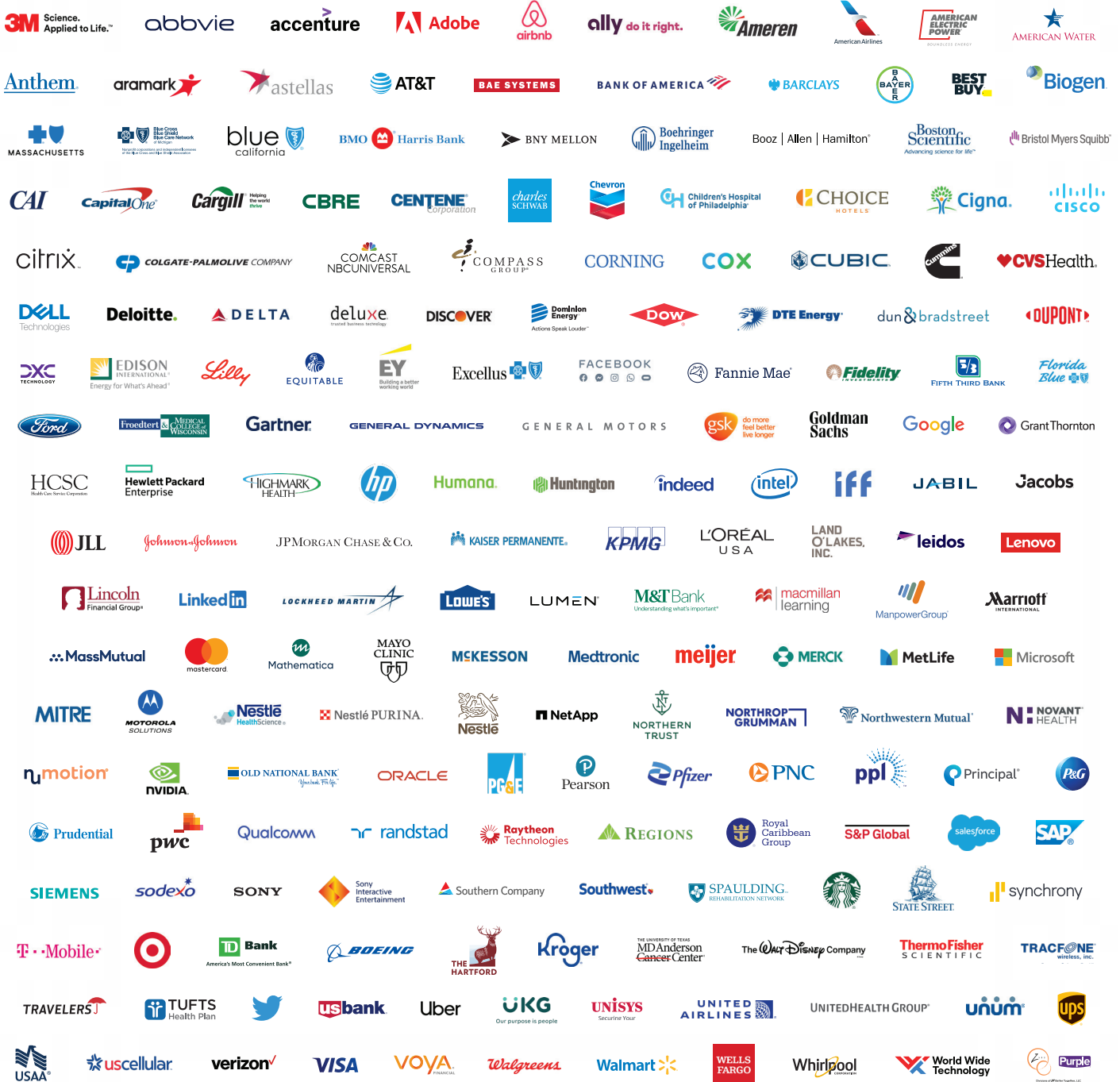


Best Place To Work For Disability Inclusion

# 2021 Disability Equality Index® (DEI®) Best Places to Work™

The American Association of People with Disabilities and Disability:IN are honored to recognize the following companies that scored 80 or above on the 2021 DEI. The DEI was completed by 319 companies in 2021.

## Companies that scored 100%



Note: A score of 100 does not mean to convey "perfection." A score of 100 on the DEI simply means that a company adheres to many of the numerous leading disability inclusion practices featured in the DEI, but there's still room for improvement.

# 2021 Disability Equality Index® (DEI®) Best Places to Work™

## Companies that scored 90%



## Companies that scored 80%



Register and learn more at [DisabilityEqualityIndex.org](https://DisabilityEqualityIndex.org)