



ACCESSIBILITY IN EVENTS

A DEEP DIVE INTO NEURO-INCLUSION

Producing a live event is an extremely complicated endeavor often requiring months of work from dozens if not hundreds of people. Each event contains many moving parts all of which must be executed exactly correctly, or the entire experience can suffer. If, for example, every piece of the puzzle is perfect, but the hotel registration desk didn't have the name of an attendee who had to wait 2 hours for their room, then all that hard work can go out the window as that attendee's experience is now diminished if not ruined.

Well, imagine how it feels to attend one of these events as a person who is neurodivergent. Maybe the lights are too bright, the music too loud, or the venue layout too difficult to navigate. And, for that attendee, all the other hard work that went into the event can go unnoticed or unappreciated.

Event producers accommodate ADA compliance, auditory aids, and dietary restrictions; sometimes because the law mandates it. But accessibility for neurodivergent individuals is offered far less frequently.

Let's define exactly what we're talking about here:

NEURODIVERGENT

refers to one person whose brain works differently. A neurodivergent person may have a medical condition, a learning disability, mental illness, traumatic brain injury, or a developmental disability like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, Tourette's syndrome.

NEUROTYPICAL

refers to individuals who have brains that function in a similar way to most of their peers (sometimes called "typically developing" peers). They develop skills, like speaking, organizing, taking care of themselves, or making social connections at about the same time-and in about the same ways-as other people their age.

NEURODIVERSE

refers to a group of people who may have a range of brain differences and/or diagnoses, but can include neurotypical people. In casual conversation, this is sometimes used interchangeably with neurodivergent.

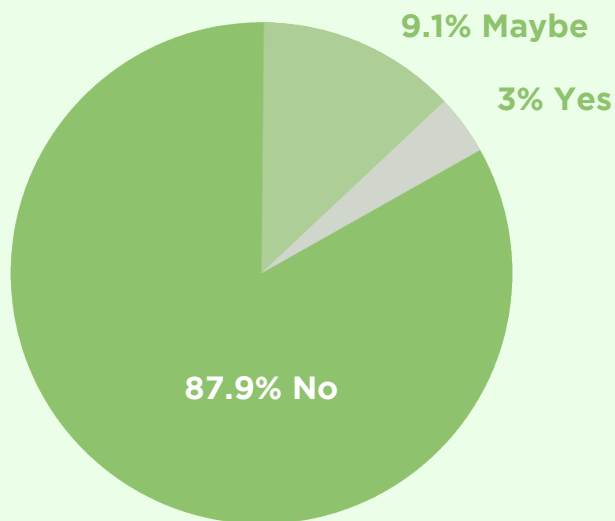
Source: Ava X. Riegelhept



ACCESSIBILITY IN EVENTS

Think this is a niche issue? According to **The Return on Disability Report**, the disability market includes **1.85 billion people**. That's larger than the population of China! If you include the friends and family of disabled individuals, that adds another 3.4 billion people. Combined, these groups have over **\$13 trillion in annual disposable income**.

And when they go to live events, they feel their needs aren't being met:

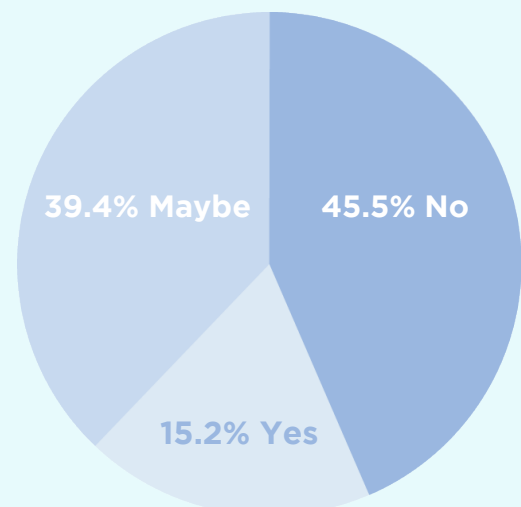


88%

Of attendees with a mental health condition or neurodivergence feel event organizers do not have enough understanding around their needs.

15%

Of attendees with a mental health condition or neurodivergence would feel confident asking an organizer for support at an event.





ACCESSIBILITY IN EVENTS

ACCESSIBILITY AT THE FOREFRONT, NOT AS AN AFTER-THOUGHT

Event producers need to incorporate accessibility measures into their plans and budgets from the start. We must go through the attendee journey with the mindset of how to make each touchpoint accessible and comfortable for everyone. We accommodate the needs of people's diets with what we offer them to eat, why wouldn't we accommodate the needs of their brains with what we offer them to experience?

Luckily, making events more neurodivergent friendly is easier than it sounds! Sometimes, simply asking our clients the question *"Are you considering any accessibility measures for the neurodivergent community?"* is enough to get the ball rolling. But if you've never done this before and want some guidance to guide you through the accessibility considerations for your specific event budgeting for a consultant such as such as Writer, DEIA + Autism Consultant, [Ava X. Rigelhaupt](#) or [Megan Henshall](#), Founder of [The Neu Project](#) is a great place to start.

"Accessibility isn't a box to check off. It takes intention, sometimes reframing your thinking of how things are done."

—Ava X. Rigelhaupt

"As we're thinking through the design of our events and experiences, we want to really closely consider the sensory input, the sensory touch points, for our users."

—Megan Henshall



This quote comes from the groundbreaking Broadway musical [How To Dance In Ohio](#) which Proscenium is proud to have co-produced.

The quote highlights that everyone's accessibility needs are different. While it's impossible to address to every individual's requirements, making a concerted effort to provide as much support as possible, and involving the neurodiverse community in the process, can make a significant impact.

By offering these accommodations at an event, all attendees will likely feel more comfortable and acknowledged. Simply knowing that you're considering this community and making an effort is incredibly valuable in itself.



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ATTENDEE JOURNEY WITH ACCESSIBILITY AT THE FOREFRONT

Let's walk through a typical live event and explore some simple options for how to make the event more accessible for everyone:

REGISTRATION

At registration, **ask open-ended questions** like: *"What do you need to enjoy the event?"*

If you find out, for example, that someone is sensitive to loud noises, alert them to the fact that there will be fireworks.

If you're offering a registration process on a website, **ensure the site complies with ADA and WCAG standards**. You can **verify compliance using tools** provided by [W3](#). You can also often enhance compliance by adding plugins to your website, such as [AccessiBe](#) or [UserWay](#).

PRE-EVENT COMMUNICATION

Make sure you **communicate with all attendees about any accessibility measures** that are available.

Share a "know before you go" guide to provide a detailed rundown of the event flow. Highlight any specific moments that could cause an issue, such as loud noises, crowded spaces, notable lighting changes, and even typical agenda items like scheduled break times. Including maps of the venue is also highly beneficial.

ARRIVAL

For attendees who have requested accessibility accommodations, **provide dedicated support upon arrival**. This may include directing them to a support person who can **offer a tour of the space pointing out restrooms, exits, and other essential areas**.

DURING THE EVENT

Create quiet areas. Organizations like The Neu Project can assist in designing these spaces. Remember, these areas aren't exclusively for neurodivergent individuals—they're beneficial for everyone.

Provide sensory kits for attendees. These may include fidget toys, adjustable "social battery" pins indicating how open you are to socializing at the moment, notebooks, coloring books, noise-cancelling earbuds, and sunglasses for bright lights. Customize these kits based on the event's specific needs. Organizations like [The Neu Project](#), [Eventwell](#), and [KultureCity](#) can help.

Develop a sensory-friendly advisory list. Distribute signage or handouts informing attendees about potentially overstimulating moments during the event.

POST EVENT SURVEY

Ask for feedback! Find out if there could have been anything else at the event that could have made the experience better, more inclusive, and accessible. People like to be asked, and to know that their needs are being considered.

RESOURCES

At Proscenium, accessibility is so important to us we led the Experiential Marketing Summit closing panel on [what we can learn from Broadway about event accessibility](#), we hosted a webinar on [Accessibility in Events](#), and we have written about the topic, and we have more initiatives coming soon..

If you'd like to learn more, please see our [Accessibility in Events](#) page for tons of great resources.

[And please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.](#)

Making live events more inclusive and accessible is a passion of ours, and we hope you'll join us in making it a priority at your future events.



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