

Countdown to compliance

Digital accessibility
is no longer a nice to have,
→ *it's the law.*

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Change

• June 28th, 2025 • June 28th, 2025 • June 28th, 2025 • June 28th, 2025 • June 28th, 2025 • June 28th, 2025 • June 28th, 2025

is coming

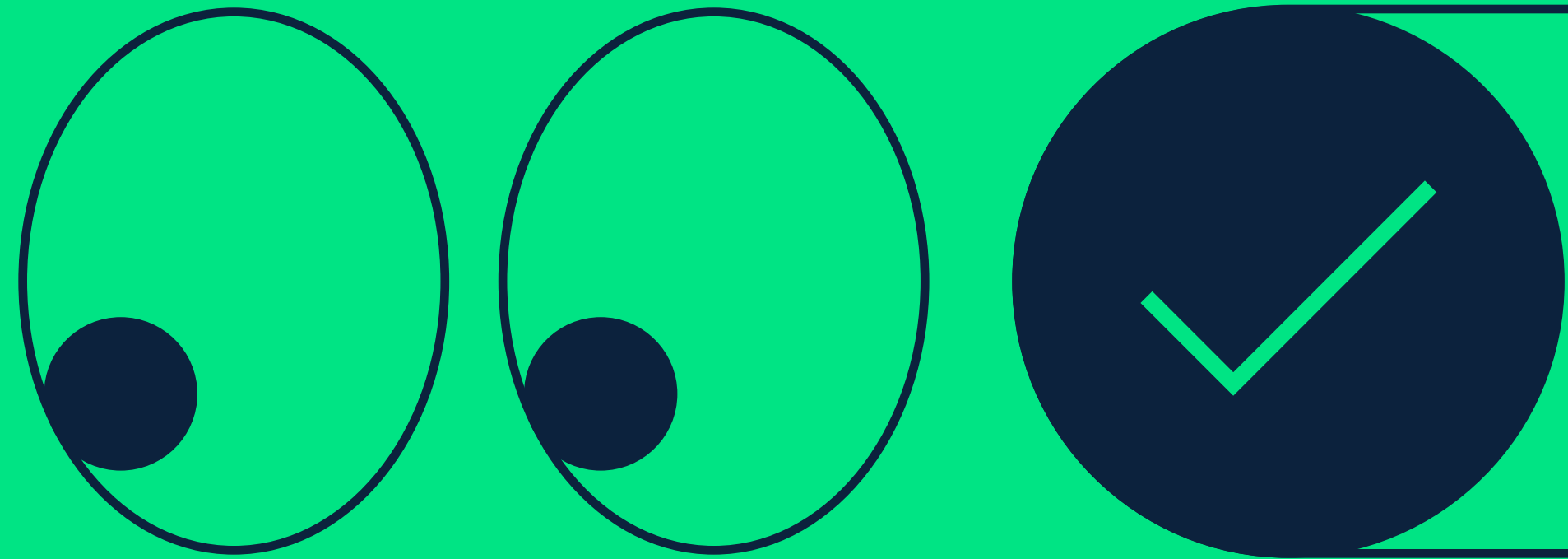
Your business must → *comply* with AA level criteria

We're currently in a transition phase when it comes to accessibility guidance; moving from the European Accessibility Directive (EAD) to the European Accessibility Act (EAA).

In short, this change means that what was optional for all and compulsory for government institutions is now becoming legislation and law across the European Union.

How does this impact my business?

The implications of this incoming legislation cover many products and touchpoints, including digital payment terminals, television equipment and even a brand's website. Your business must now comply with a minimum AA level criteria according to the Web Accessibility Content Guides (WCAG).



Introducing the *European* Accessibility Act (EAA)



ity • Societal inclusion is a *digital opportunity* • So
n is a *digital opportunity* • Societal inclusion is a *dig*

We believe digital accessibility is a *fundamental* right. Every user deserves seamless access online. Minor obstacles can hinder a website's success. Prioritising the needs of all is both a *moral* and *strategic* imperative.

Not just good
practice but a
huge financial
opportunity

21%

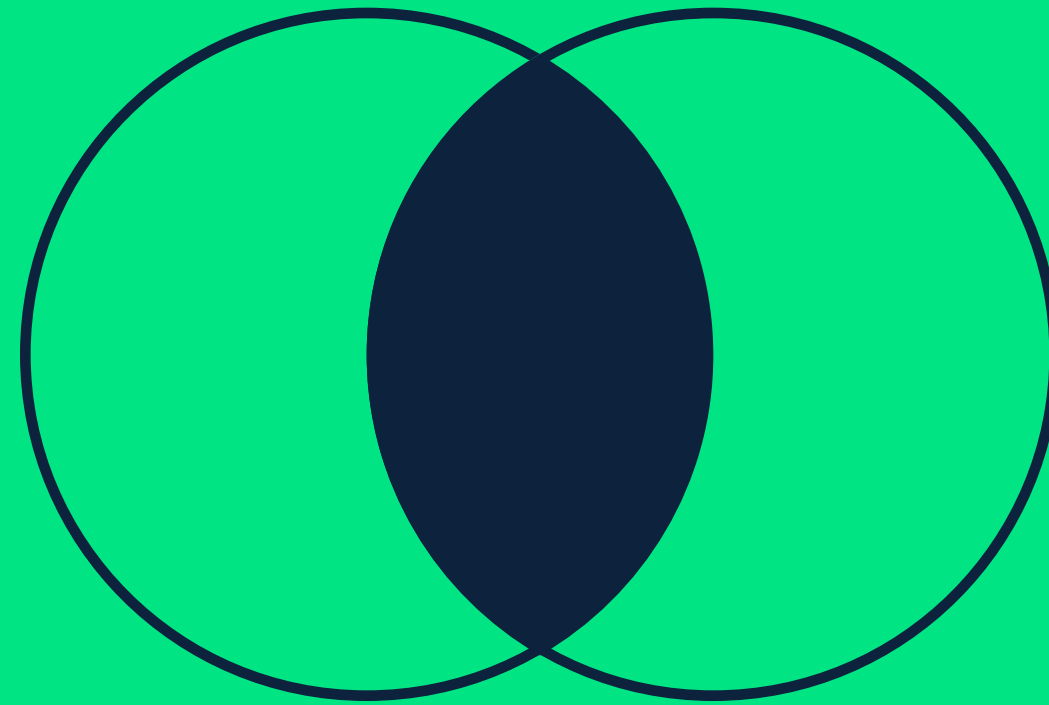
of the EU population is aged 65 and over.

100 million

people in the EU with a disability.

£275 billion

is the estimated spending power of this demographic in the UK alone



Disabilities & *Digital* products

Disability comes in many forms

For instance, accessibility can be misconstrued as crafting product solutions for permanently disabled users. When conscious inclusion is considered, we should resolve challenges that may affect even temporary or situational impairments as well. These features and considerations can bring value to the broader audience. Designing for one, enriching for all.

Did you know?

Many *everyday technologies* we take for granted, started as *accessibility projects*.

01

Voice control

The technology that makes us call out for Alexa and Siri. Voice control is an example of technology to aid those with a permanent disability. An individual who may have experienced a loss of limbs or vision impairment can ask for the weather or closest shop.

02

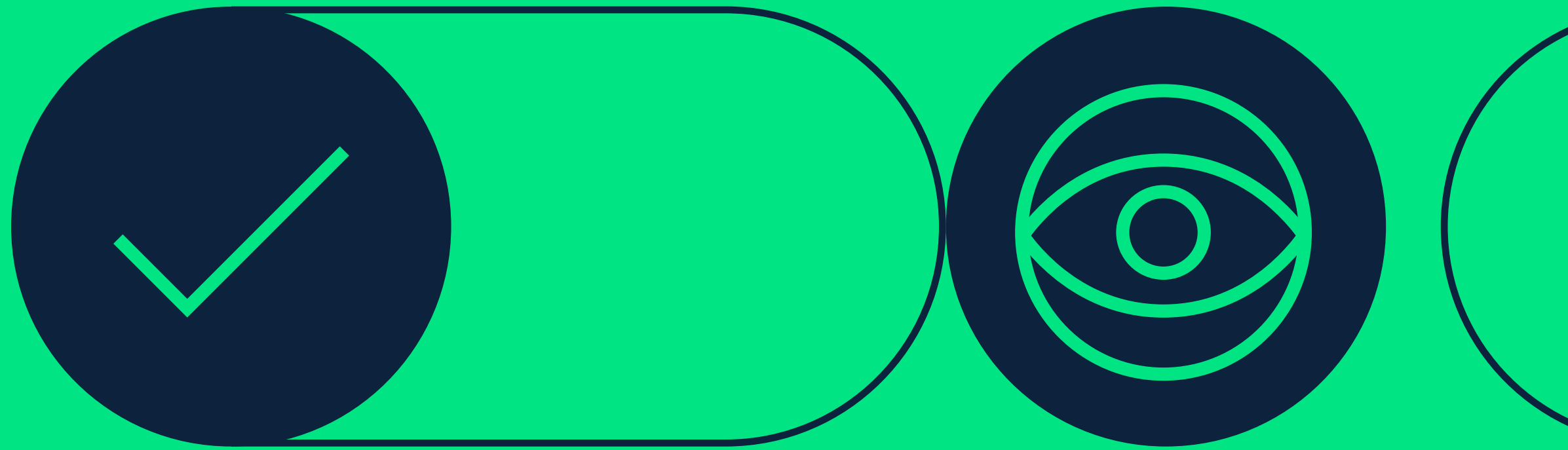
Electric toothbrushes

As recommended by your dentist. Developed for individuals with limited motor skills, but another opportunity to highlight how this is beneficial for individuals with a temporary disability: someone facing a short-term injury, like a fractured arm, that impedes their interactions temporarily.

03

Closed captioning

Developed by the BBC to allow the hard of hearing to watch television. Now, a feature enabling us to consume popular video content when faced with situational impairments, such as commuting on a noisy subway.



Our research *framework*

Auditing 35 *brands*

    across 11 sectors

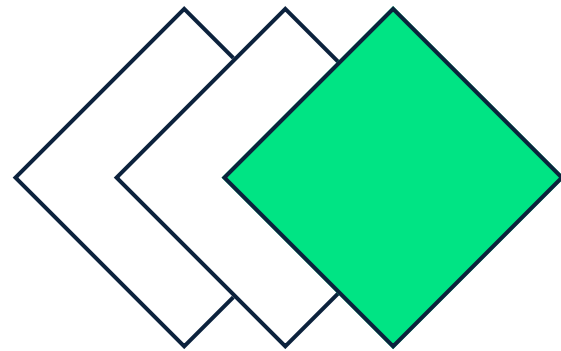
Our experts dissected the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) criteria, cross-referenced with the European Accessibility Act, then broke it down into a site audit framework based on 25 criteria points. Our aim? To score, calculate and identify trends and insights that can help shape the journey to compliance; avoiding common pitfalls and showcasing best practices.

Identifying market leaders & where sectors should *focus* their efforts

Using the Tangent team's expertise from previous projects in which accessibility was a key driver for digital transformation, our scoring method produced a simple way to identify the market leading brands in accessibility and where others should focus their attention prior to 2025. We looked at a wide range of sectors that caters to both B2C and B2B markets, from professional services to travel and everything in between. Collectively, these brands serve over 1 billion customers across the EU.

Our audit cross-referenced each website against the associated AA criteria within each of the WCAG's POUR pillars (perceivable, operable, understandable and robust). We carried out each audit using this framework, making a conscious effort to replicate the way users would interact with webpages and assistive technologies. Finally, we validated any findings with metrics from [Site Improve](#) and [Equally.ai](#), two market leading accessibility software tools, for a more robust study. Once this process had been completed, we attributed a Future-ready score (FRS) out of 100% for each brand and sector.

Perceivable



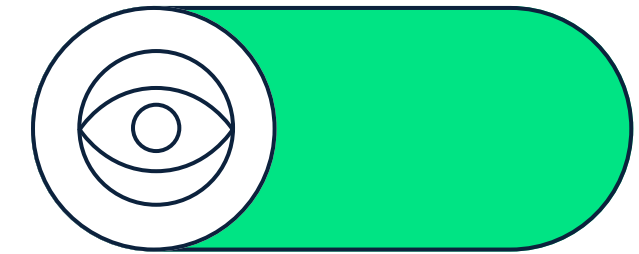
Functionality

Ensure all webpage content and fonts are responsive and scalable across devices, including landscape and portrait page orientation depending on user context.



Typography

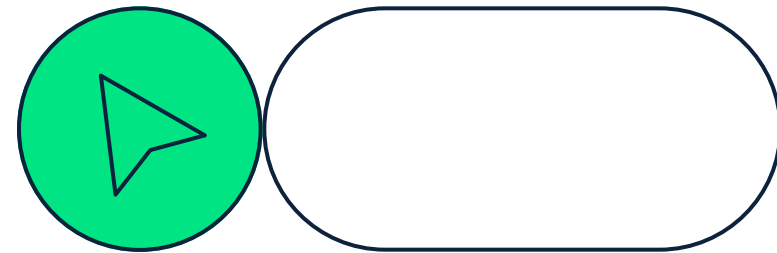
Enable users to control all content that requires play and pause, including the ability to disable moving or flashing content that may otherwise trigger potential seizures.



Information

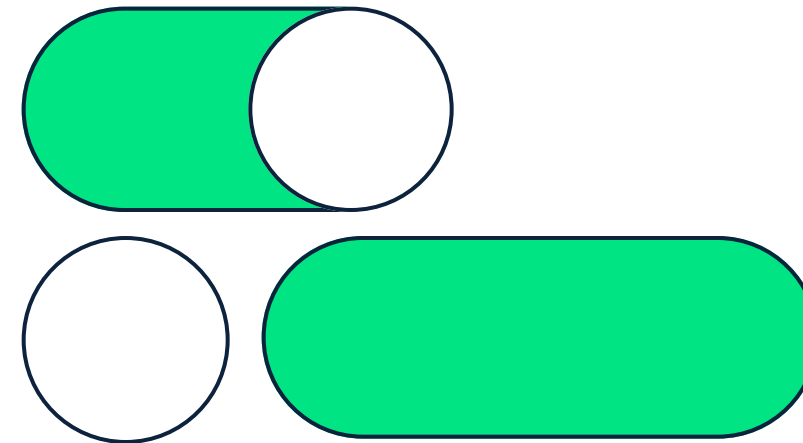
Each webpage should provide alternative text, transcripts and captions for non-text content, imagery and videos to enable a variety of impairment contexts.

Operable



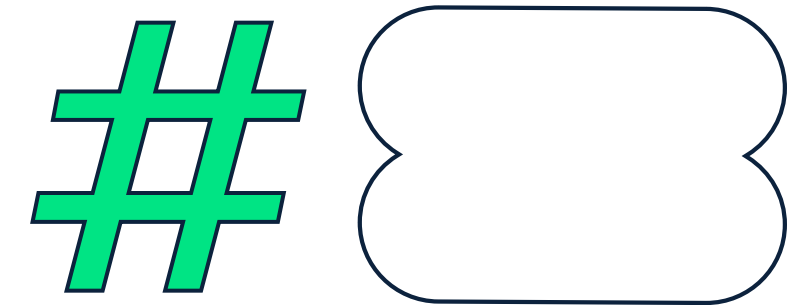
Navigation

Make sure all webpage content and interactions are navigable using only a keyboard and indicating where the user is currently focussed ('active focus').



Control

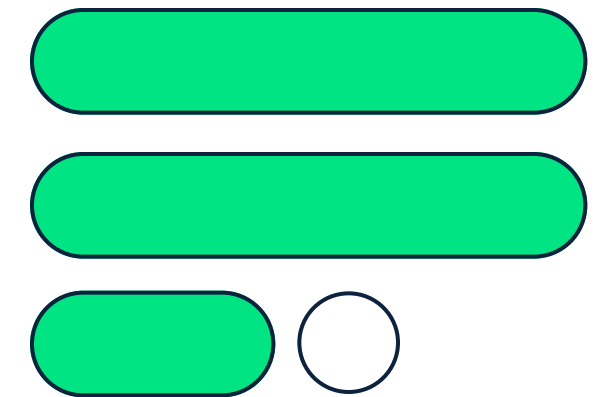
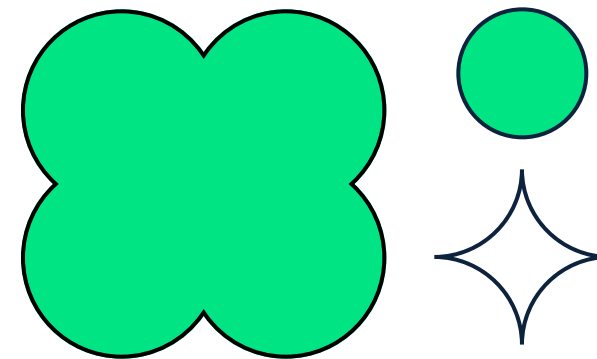
Confirm content structure is logical and can be read by a screen reader, and ensure text and background comply with the minimum legible contrast ratio.



Media

Each webpage should provide alternative text, transcripts and captions for non-text content, imagery and videos to enable a variety of impairment contexts.

Understandable



Forms

Make it easy for people to identify and correct errors in forms that behave with predictable patterns, ensuring colour is not the only way to explain or distinguish a change in state.

Content

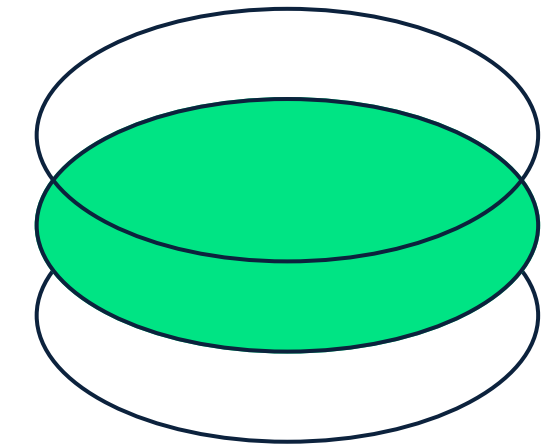
Content should be easily understandable, clearly distinguishing what language it is written in and providing an explanation for abbreviations (unless they are common like UK, EU & VAT)

Robust



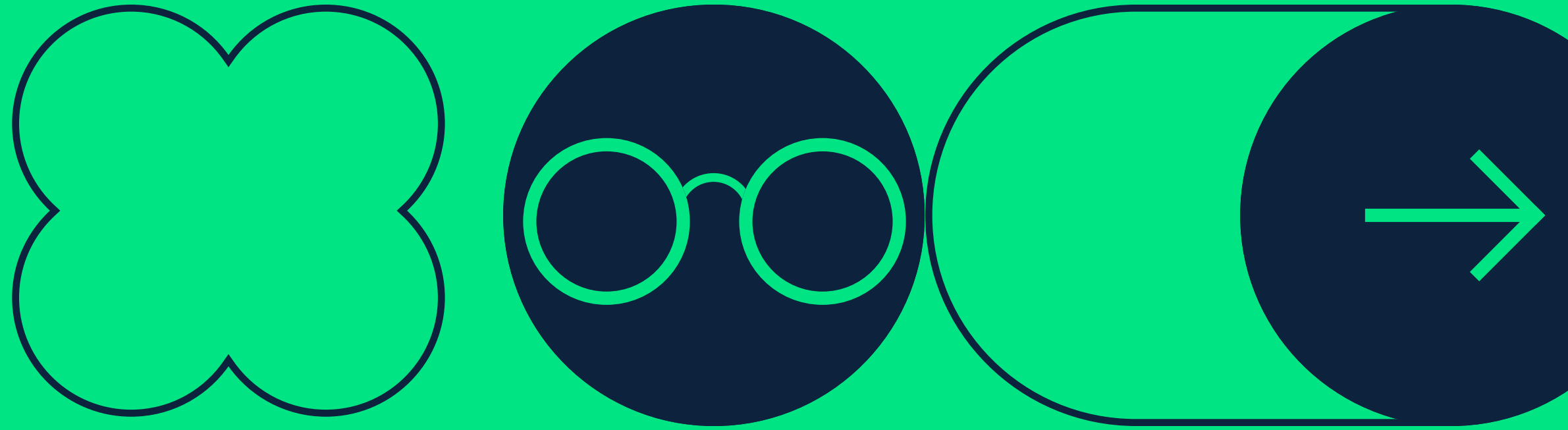
Assistive technology

Ensure your website code allows assistive technologies to identify components and their respective states of input.



Modal / Overlays

Ensure important status messages or modal dialogs are operable and escapable using assistive technologies.



Findings, insights & *opportunities*

How close are we

 to *AA compliance*

for 2025?

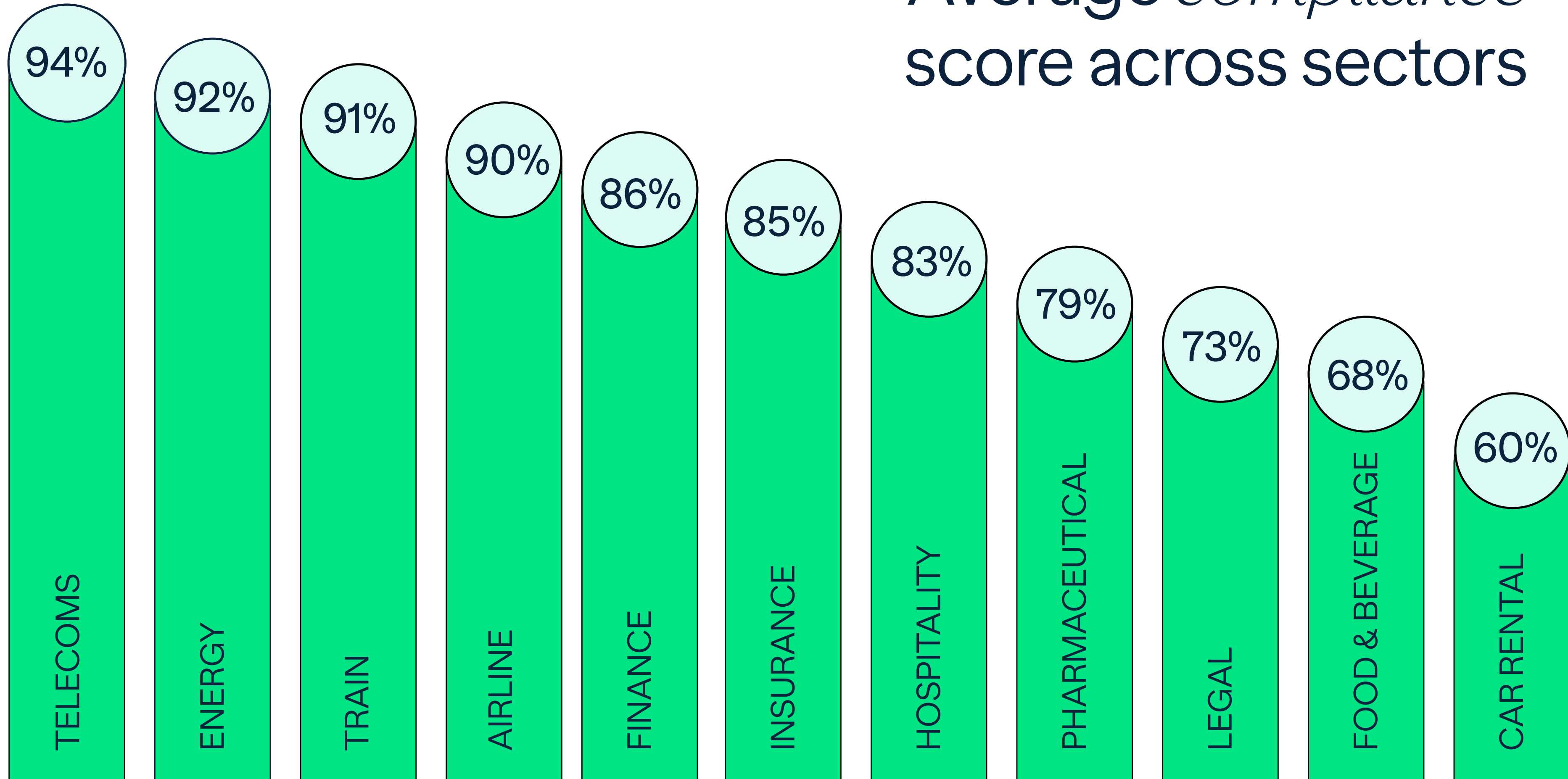
100% is the benchmark metric for AA level compliance according to the four audit themes Perceivable, Operable, Understandable & Robust.

Sectors and brands we audited

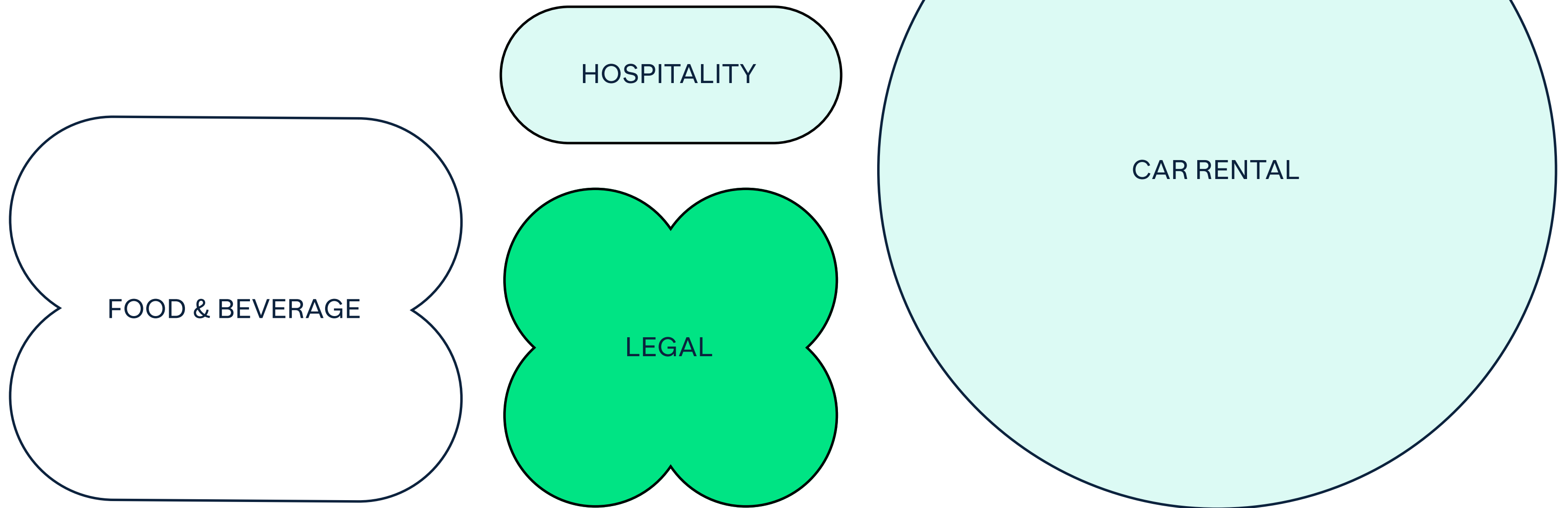
Airline • Car Rental • Energy • Finance
Food & beverage • Insurance • Hospitality
Legal • Pharmaceutical • Telecoms • Train



Average *compliance* score across sectors



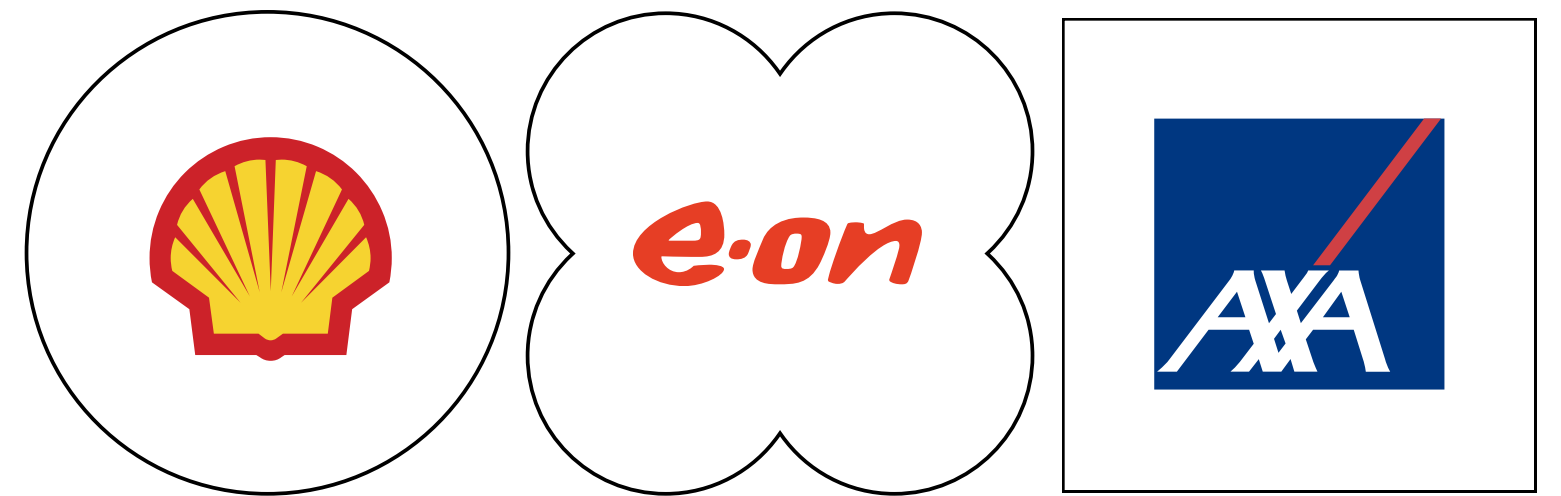
The top 4 sectors with the biggest *opportunities* to close the gap



The percentage of brands adhering to these key accessibility features within each sector

	Car rental	Food & beverage	Legal	Hospitality
Skip to content functionality <small>Allows users to bypass multiple header links in a navigation and jump directly to the main content.</small>	0%	0%	33%	0%
Keyboard-only navigation <small>Using the keyboard such as tab and directional arrows to navigate and select interactive elements.</small>	0%	0%	33%	67%
Assistive technology <small>Enabling accessibility tools such as a screen reader or colour contrast inverter to aid users.</small>	17%	50%	83%	100%

Here are the top *performers* in our “100% Club”



Congratulations! These brands were the only ones among those measured to earn 100% compliance. Are your digital touchpoints likely to join the club? If you're not sure, read on to find some quick wins and big opportunities for improvement.

The 4 biggest trends and *→ opportunities* across sectors

01

Alternative text

56% of brands could easily lift their scores with alternative text ('alt text') for images, icons & non-text content.

02

"Skip to main content"

56% of brands could make small adaptations to their header navigation by using a "Skip to main content" link for keyboard navigators

03

Colour Contrast

43% of brands could improve their minimum colour contrast ratio for text content on page backgrounds.

04

Keyboard navigation

35% of brands had small or large opportunities to improve how users can navigate with keyboard-only controls.

What is alternative text (*alt text*)?



Alt text (alternative text) is used to describe images, graphs, charts and other non-text content to individuals who rely on screen readers or other assistive technologies.

How to improve 'alt text'?

To enhance alt text effectiveness, tailor descriptions to user needs and make specific references to detail in the content. Regular user testing and input can also aid in refining descriptions depending on the context of your business and audience. You may also want to leverage AI tools to generate alt text, but consider including human oversight to ensure accuracy and consistency, fostering a more inclusive online environment.

Why is 'alt text' important?

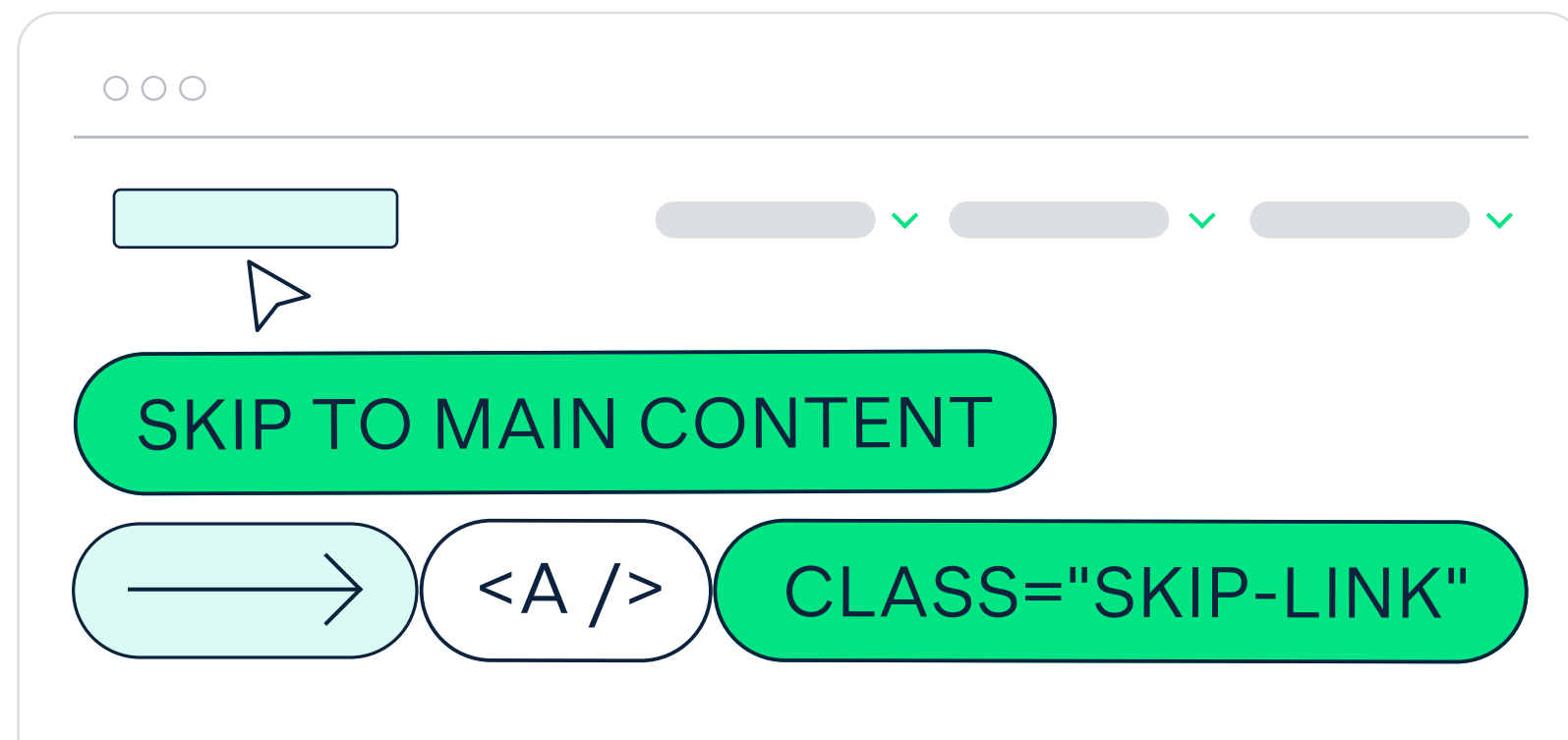
Alt text helps with the perception of the content displayed, identifying context and allowing assistive technologies to read the summary aloud. Additionally, it serves as a description if images fail to load and serves as a way to help index content on search engines for SEO.

What does it mean to “*Skip to main content*”?

A "skip to main content" link: typically hidden, but accessible to assistive technologies. This allows users to bypass multiple header links in the navigation and jump directly to the main content.

How to make your site more operable

To address this issue, web developers should incorporate a hidden link in the webpage header that becomes visible when focussed by a keyboard's tab key. Implementing this simple yet effective solution, websites can provide a smoother browsing experience for these users.



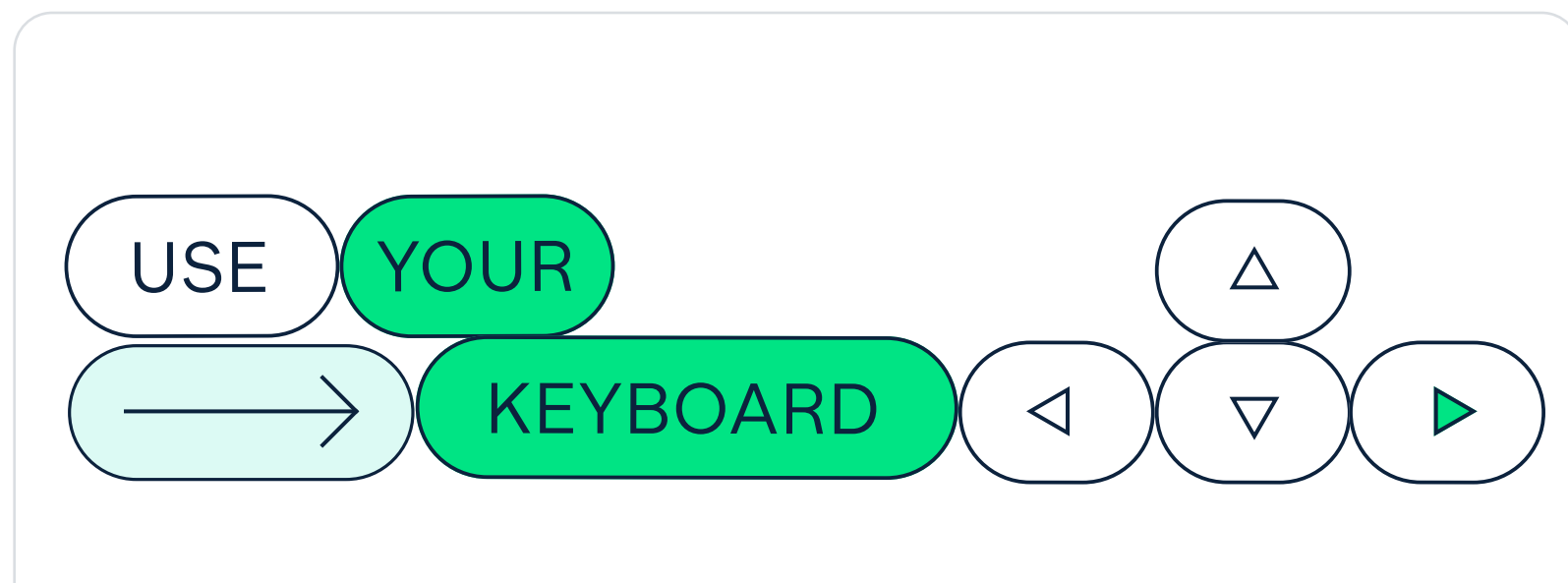
Are your *colours* meeting customer → needs?

The WCAG's minimum AA requirement for colour contrast ratio is to compensate for the loss of contrast sensitivity for different users. To achieve the appropriate accessibility contrast, the colours have to meet the this criteria at both large (24 pixels) and small (16 pixels) text sizes.

Our audit observed companies including the airline KLM and telecoms giants Orange adapt their brand colour palette for their websites in order to improve contrast ratio. Additionally, our data highlighted a negative trend across 3 out of 4 brands using orange colour palettes. These all failed to meet the minimum colour contrast ratio for at least one aspect of their webpage.

What does *keyboard only navigation* mean?

Keyboard accessibility is one of the most important aspects of web accessibility. Many users with motor disabilities rely on a keyboard. When keyboard navigating a webpage, pressing the tab key will move the user's focus through the content between interactive elements.



How to make your site more operable

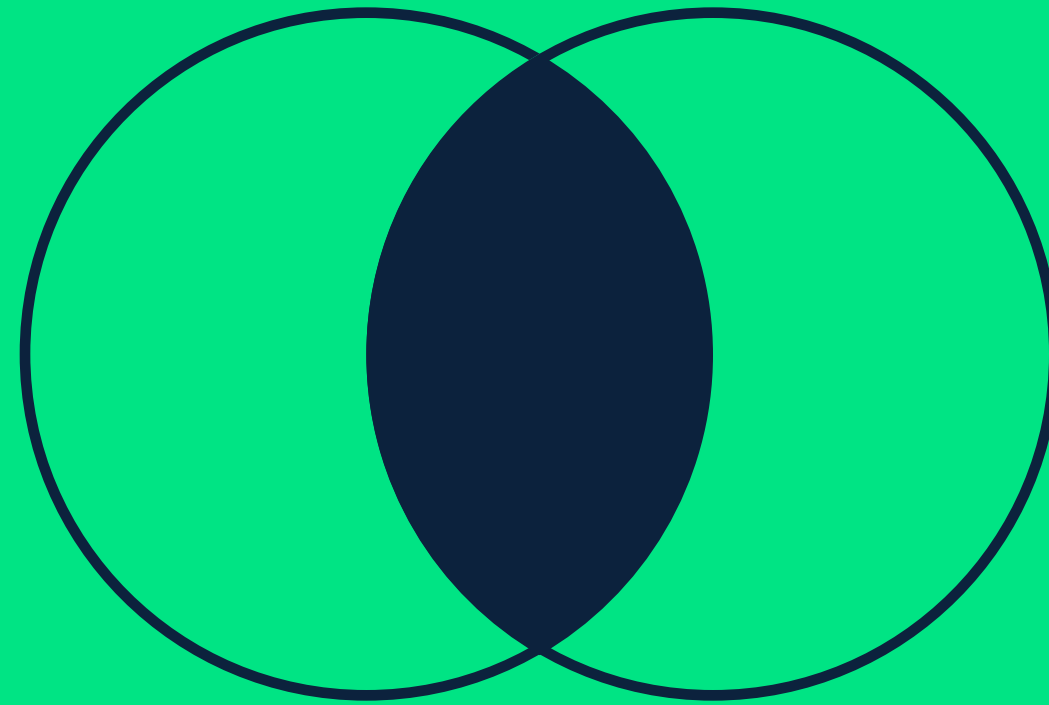
Keyboard navigation and identifying focus are essential aspects of HTML5 web accessibility. Users should be able to identify correctly labelled elements, make selections and control interactive behaviour such as a toggle or dropdown. Defining the content hierarchy and tab order with skip link features will unlock your website for a broad range of assistive technology users.

When it comes to EAA, there is more than *meets the eye*

It's clear the parameters of what it means to be truly accessible friendly are vast, and many of the criteria from EAA legislation can be small, often imperceptible details. Details that are, however, in no way insignificant.

As time goes by, the meaning of what it means to be compliant from an accessibility perspective is subject to change and growth – and much like the humble electric toothbrush, tools and features intended for accessible audiences will undoubtedly push into mainstream use as well.

That's why it's important to know where your digital touchpoints stand accessibility-wise, to assess and adapt to changes quickly and, wherever possible, be future minded with your digital experience decisions.



Accessibility in action: Guide Dogs

Guide Dogs



For the blind *association*

One of the leading UK charities supporting blind and partially blind people, the organisation and its brand are widely recognised, and accessibility (in all its forms) is core to the organisation's mission. We helped them on their accessibility journey. Take a look at how.

Evolving the brand's *digital guidelines*

We were engaged to review the current brand application on the Guide Dogs website and evolve their current digital brand guidelines for a more consistent and accessible experience. We offered strategic direction on how best to leverage the Guide Dogs brand elements across digital touch points and ensure the online journey told their iconic brand story.

01

Website accessibility audit

We documented every instance of brand, colour, typographic style and component available across digital touch points. We pinpointed any accessibility concerns and tested other elements for compliance.

02

Gap analysis

We identified the biggest “gaps” or opportunities for us to focus our resource on and enhance design and UX, for a uniform, accessible brand experience

03

Creative brief & exploration

We explored different pillars of the Guide Dogs brand with four core briefs. Refining visual applications to harmonise the online brand image and narrative.

04

Documentation

Finally, compiling our suggestions for future designers, marketers and developers to ensure consistent user experiences and empowering internal teams to utilise the guides as their digital brand guardian.

To retain a consistent colour pattern across the website and avoid any "tutti fruity" effects, avoid using the below brand colour applications on guidance.

- Inky blue text / Yellow background (Rating: AAA)
- Inky blue text / Green background (Rating: AAA)
- Inky blue text / Orange background (Rating: AAA)
- Yellow (Rating: AAA)
- Green (Rating: AAA)
- Orange (Rating: AAA)
- Pink (Rating: AAA)
- Light blue (Rating: AAA)
- Yellow (Accessibility: Failed)
- Green (Accessibility: Failed)
- Orange (Accessibility: Failed)
- Pink (Accessibility: Failed)
- Light blue (Accessibility: Failed)

Guide Dogs Digital Style Guidelines

Interactive styles

Text field

Default

Label

Fill: "Cool grey"
Outline: 1px "Light Grey"

Completed

Label

Fill: #E0E0E0
Outline: 1px "Light Grey"

Fill: No fill (form white)
Outline One: 1px "Inky blue"
Outline Two: 1px dashed "Yellow"

Tip: Use the Gov website design system documentation or any further guidance on selections.
<https://design-system.service.gov.uk/components/radios>
<https://design-system.service.gov.uk/components/checkboxes>

Guide Dogs Digital Style Guidelines

Typography

Fonts

The Guide Dogs' font used is the Castledown font family, which serves as the brand typeface. This consists of regular, bold and heavy. It is a warm, friendly font and when used correctly adds humanity to our communications.

Castledown family ✓

Castledown Heavy

Castledown Bold

Castledown Regular

Caveat brush family ✗

Caveat brush regular

Do not use the Caveat brush family font on the web. This advice is given because stylised typefaces, although visually appealing, can be difficult to read for individuals with visual impairments. This is done in order to maintain a minimum AA compliant web standard, as recommended by the WCAG guidelines.

Guide Dogs Digital Style Guidelines

User interface

Styling: Accessible Selection Styles

This page shows examples (not extensive) of how to apply colour to different types of selections such as radios and checkboxes. This would be for anything that requires a list of options to be presented where a dropdown field is not appropriate.

Each element is an illustrative example only of how the repeatable styling will create a consistent and accessible pattern for our users. There is no technical implementation guidance and this should be a consideration when developing the component library.

Default

Multi-select

Single select

Multi-line
Single selection that has some descriptive copy

2px line weight container
2px line weight selector

Hover

Multi-select

Single select

Multi-line
Single selection that has some descriptive copy

Secondary colour tint fill for when the cursor is hovering over the web element.
Colour hexcode: #D9E0E0

Selected

Multi-select

Single select

Multi-line
Single selection that has some descriptive copy

Primary colour fill.
Note: Do not use image file type icons for checkboxes. These will not be picked up by a contrast inversion tool.

Guide Dogs Digital Style Guidelines

Container styling

Default site radius

Image

8 px

styling & shape

elements have a coherent and repeatable styling and it may not be clear as to

Button colour ruling

Use the primary colour for the core call to action. The blue background should use

“

Tangent have provided us with real expertise regarding our digital brand guideline. Not only will they reinforce our accessibility best practice, they will help effectively communicate the Guide Dogs story and deliver a consistent and repeatable design online.



Jason Messingham
Senior Digital Product Owner

Less than

2 *years*

until crunch time.

June 28th, 2025: the date the European Accessibility Act (EAA) will be enforced.

TANGENT

Let's chat about your *challenges*

Get in touch



The insights gleaned from just a small sample of companies across a handful of industries has illuminated the depth and breadth of EAA, and painted a picture of the journey many will need to take to achieve compliance.

Our team of specialists across design, consultancy and tech disciplines are available to support you on your journey; from understanding your digital readiness through to bringing them to life on the page.

If you'd like to discuss the next steps on your accessibility journey, reach out today.

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