Participant Recruitment in Accessibility Research

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Abstract

Recruiting participants from disability communities for accessibility research presents unique challenges that require careful consideration of ethical practices, intersectional representation, methodological rigor, and community sustainability. As accessibility research continues to grow and evolve, researchers face tensions between meaningfully including participants with disabilities and addressing emerging concerns around recruited participants not adequately representing the diversity of the community, overburdening certain participants, participant verification, and fair compensation practices. This workshop will bring together members of the ASSETS community to examine current recruiting practices and document insights into ethical, rigorous, and inclusive participant recruitment in disability research. Through facilitated discussions, we will explore three main themes: (1) methods and models, (2) eligibility criteria and participant verification, and (3) ethical and sustainability considerations. The workshop aims to share current practices, identify key challenges, and develop preliminary guidelines to support accessibility researchers in more sustainable participant recruitment.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → *Accessibility theory, concepts and paradigms*; *Empirical studies in accessibility*; *Accessibility design and evaluation methods*; Accessibility systems and tools; Accessibility technologies; • **Social and professional topics** → *User characteristics.*

Keywords

Participants, Recruiting, Accessibility Research, Disability Studies

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1 Introduction and Background

"Nothing about us without us" is a key principle for computing accessibility research, which calls for the inclusion of people with disabilities at different levels [2, 22, 32]. One of the most basic levels is including people with disabilities as participants in accessibility research studies [30]. Research has demonstrated that the lived experiences of people with disabilities are hard to simulate [10, 12, 34]. Further, the benefits of participatory approaches range from increased justice to better designs when they are centered around participants' needs and valuable expertise [13, 21, 30, 37]. Participants with disabilities may also find value in contributing to research studies and technology development [16, 19]. However, while increased attention to computing accessibility research can have several benefits [20], it may also put a burden on communities of people with disabilities if proper considerations are not in place. We see, for example, online communities in platforms such as Reddit implementing recruiting bans for specific practices, such as unpaid studies[1]. Further, in light of the systemic barriers that have traditionally excluded people with disabilities as researchers, accessibility research often includes non-disabled researchers who may not be members of the communities they recruit from [38]. This etic experience may require additional care to build trust with the communities of people with disabilities and to avoid models that can reinforce existing biases. While a recent ASSETS workshop aimed to address the lack of a practical guide for accessibility research [23], recruiting was not one of their topics, which remains an essential step of the research process.

The outcomes of the challenges of recruiting people with disabilities have been documented [8, 17, 30]. These include research studies with small sample sizes, which the community has adapted to [13, 17, 20, 30]. Furthermore, as recruiting and data collection methods have become more digital and asynchronous, additional challenges have emerged in the broader discourse of human-computer

[1] https://www.reddit.com/r/deaf/comments/1i4gk9n/new_total_ban_on_research_affective_immediately/

interaction (HCI) and qualitative research related to fraudulent responses (e.g., [15, 26–28, 33]). Considering the importance of capturing the perspectives of people with disabilities for accessibility research and design [30, 32], fraudulent responses (e.g., non-disabled people claiming to be disabled) may be more detrimental in this context.

Accessibility research had used medical models of disability, but moved towards social, identity, cultural or political/relational models of disability [3, 4, 9, 13, 20–22, 25, 35]. All models, however, may create different tensions around the verifiability of eligibility criteria for accessibility studies (e.g. [9, 17, 18]). Online recruiting platforms, such as Prolific[2], have promised to address some of these issues and are being used in computing accessibility work (e.g., [1, 5, 24]). However, their screening methods' verifiability remains unknown, and using the platform may still require additional screening when their screening doesn't match a study's criteria (e.g. [5, 24]). With the growing popularity of generative AI, concerns around fraudulence may only be increasing [26], as someone could feasibly generate responses that align with verification methods. Researchers may also turn to large language models as a replacement for human participants to circumvent recruiting challenges, which may increase the risk for epistemic injustice [36].

Researchers and activists have also argued that disability identities should be understood alongside other social identities—such as gender [6] and race [11, 14]—rather than viewed as fixed traits defined solely by physical or psychological abilities. While research communities have developed guidance for writing about diverse identities, e.g. for gender [29] and disability [31], we have not found similar recommendations for considering this intersectionality when recruiting.

Thus, considering these challenges, we believe that a workshop bringing together a diverse set of accessibility researchers to share current recruiting challenges and practices, and discuss the future of recruiting participants with disabilities, would be timely and provide a strong contribution to the field. In this workshop, we would like to discuss topics such as:

(1) The methods researchers currently use to recruit participants from different disability communities for studies.
(2) How researchers conceptualize their eligibility criteria, and manage the tensions between different models of disability and the verifiability of eligibility criteria for different research methods.
(3) The ethical considerations of sustainably recruiting and involving participants with disabilities in accessibility research.

The overall goal of the workshop will be to use the discussion of these topics to distill:

a **Current best practices in recruiting participants with disabilities**. While researchers have provided some guidance, e.g., through partnerships with advocacy groups [17], a discussion among researchers around their current practices should yield more detailed insights.
b **Shortcomings and tensions with current recruiting methods.** While the *outcomes* of the challenges have been documented, as summarized above, our discussion should yield insights into what challenges and tensions researchers face across communities and why.
c **Suggestions for how to recruit participants with disabilities moving forward.** These should provide support for both current accessibility researchers and researchers getting started in the field, to leverage both best practices and be aware of the shortcomings of different recruitment methods.

[2]https://prolific.com

2 Workshop Plans

The schedule of this online workshop was designed to maximize inclusive participation and attempt to mitigate the negative aspects of remote collaboration. Table 1 summarizes the workshop schedule, which we will divide into three online sessions spread over multiple days to reduce participant fatigue. While spreading the workshop over multiple days may introduce additionally scheduling challenges, we will ensure that attendees who are not able to fully participate synchronously in all sessions have access to discussion notes and an opportunity to contribute to the discussion via the workshop's Discord channel. We have modeled the workshop schedule based on a successful previous online ASSETS workshop [7].

2.1 Pre-Workshop Plans

We will advertise the workshop using our professional circles and social media, beginning on July 16, 2025 and will take responses until August 8, 2025. We will solicit applications to participate in the workshop through a statement of interest (SOI), completed using an accessible form using Google Forms, where we will ask participants about 1) their experience with recruiting participants with disabilities, including which communities they have worked with, and how they have thought about the workshops' topics; 2) why they are interested in participating in the workshop; 3) what subtopics they may want to discuss during the workshop; 4) any potential access needs to allow us to plan ahead. In our Google Form, we will note that using generative AI to write or edit the responses is acceptable with acknowledgment, but we will also accept applications with the kinds of errors humans produce, so AI-assisted editing is not necessarily needed. We will aim for 30 participants (see Section 6 for details on how we would review applications if we receive more than 30).

After acceptance notifications are sent out to attendees on August 15, 2025, we will send a welcome email to participants with instructions on how to join the workshops' Discord and Zoom call. We will also include a poll to gauge participants' availability for different options for the 3 sessions to take place between October 20 and October 26, 2025. We will request a response from participants by September 1, 2025 to allow ample time to address any access needs. Lastly, we will also request that participants share a short paragraph introducing themselves and their background to be shared on the Discord server before the workshop begins.

2.2 During the Workshop

The workshop's sessions will be divided as follows:

- **Session 1: Introduction and General Theme Discussion (90 minutes)** The first session will begin with 30-minutes of introductions and ice breakers. Workshop organizers will begin by introducing themselves, followed by a 10-minute overview presentation introducing the organization of the

Session	Time	Description	Type
1	00:00-00:10	Welcome and Introductory Remarks	Presentation
	00:10 - 00:30	Introductions and Ice Breaker	Participatory
	00:30-01:20	Themed Group Discussion	Small-group Discussion
	01:20-0:1:30	Themed Group Summarization	Summary & Note Taking
	Asynchronous	Discussion Continues on Discord	Small-group Discussion
2	00:00-00:45	Share-out of Themed Group Discussion	Large Group Discussion
	00:45-01:20	Area of Interest Group Discussion	Small-group Discussion
	01:20-01:30	Area of Interest Group Summarization	Summary & Note Taking
	Asynchronous	Discussion continues on Discord	Small-group Discussion
3	00:00-00:20	Share-out of Area of Interest Group Discussion	Large Group Discussion
	00:20-00:50	Synthesis of Workshop Insights	Large Group Synthesis
	00:50-01:00	Closing Remarks & Next Steps	Presentation

Table 1: Tentative schedule for the workshop schedule, with all times relative to start of each session, as the scheduling of the sessions is subject to attendee availability as indicated on their SOI.

workshop, workshop norms and standards, as well as how platforms like Discord and Google Docs will be used. Following this, attendees will have the opportunity to introduce themselves and share the themes and questions of the workshop that interested them most. Attendees will then have the opportunity to move into one of three break-out discussion groups. Each group will be tasked with discussing one of the main three themes (i.e., methods and models; eligibility criteria and participant verification; or ethics and sustainability). Each discussion group will have a facilitator, who will have a list of discussion questions and prompts, as well as a designated note-taker. Note-takers will be tasked with taking anonymized notes from the discussion that will be shared with the broader group following the discussion, while facilitators will be responsible for ensuring equitable turn-taking in the discussion and shepherding the discussion back if extended tangents are taken. Additionally, each facilitators will have a list of discussion points drafted by the organizers, as well as additional points of discussion raised by attendees in their SOI.

The one-hour synchronous discussion session will consist of 50-minutes of facilitated discussion, with the final 10-minutes being allocated for the note-taker to summarize the major points discussed, where consensus was reached, as well as what lingering questions the group had. Once the session has concluded, the note-taker will post a link to the notes on the group-specific Discord channel as well as create discussion threads for each of the lingering questions. Attendees will have the option to interact asynchronously on Discord. Before the start of the next session, the note-taker will include the points discussed on Discord to the notes document to be shared.

- **Session 2: Interest-Specific Discussion (90 minutes)** The second session will begin with a 45-minute all-group share-out and discussion session. In this session, each of the three break-out groups from Session 1 will be given 15-minutes to summarize and share the points they discussed with the full group, as well as invite members of the other groups to contribute. Therefore, we will suggest that each note-taker budget approximately 5 minutes for summarization and sharing, and 10 minutes for large-group discussion.

  Following these share-outs, attendees will be invited to take-part in an additional 45-minute small-group discussion section. The session will function similarly to the previous small-group discussions with a designated facilitator and note-taker. However, these small-groups will be organized around specific identified areas of interest. In the SOI, attendees will be asked to rate their interest in participating in a small-group discussion centered on various topics, including, for example, nuances of recruiting from specific communities such as blind and low-vision (BLV) participants, recruitment practices in certain regions such as the Global South, or considering intersectionality when recruiting. Attendees will also be asked to suggest their own topics. Based on the SOIs, the organizers will identify a selection of areas of interest to create themed discussion groups around. Note-takers will similarly post notes and create threads for lingering discussion questions to Discord for asynchronous participation.
- **Session 3: Synthesis and Closing (60 minutes)** In the final session, we will take 20-minutes for a share-out in which note-takers from each interest-based break-out group from Session 2 will summarize the major topics they discussed. The next 30-minutes will be dedicated to identifying the themes, concrete recommendations, and lingering questions identified throughout the workshop. In the final 10-minutes, the organizers will thank everyone for their participation, discuss the next steps for writing a white paper of the workshop findings, invite attendees to contribute to the white paper, and remind attendees to use the workshop Discord as an opportunity to highlight any themes, recommendations, or questions that they have after the workshop has finished.

2.3 Post-Workshop Plans

After the workshop, we will maintain access to the workshop materials (e.g. slides, notes, etc.) and the Discord channel, for asynchronous interactions. We will provide access to these materials for up to a year to ensure any participants are able to engage fully. The

organizers will write a white paper summarizing the discussion and conclusions from the workshop, which attendees may contribute to if they expressed interest during Session 3 of the workshop, or on Discord. We will disseminate this white paper to the broader ASSETS community to ensure that the discussion outcomes are beneficial to the community.

3 Diversity and Inclusion Considerations

We are committed to creating an inclusive and accessible workshop environment that welcomes participants from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and geographic locations. Our decision to host this workshop virtually is intentionally designed to increase accessibility for individuals who cannot or choose not to travel to Denver.

3.1 Geographic and Cultural Diversity

ASSETS attracts participants from around the world, and we actively encourage submissions and participation from attendees representing diverse geographic regions, cultural backgrounds, and research contexts. We particularly welcome contributions from researchers in the Global South and non-Western countries, as well as those studying topics relevant to these regions, recognizing that accessibility research has historically been biased toward Western and Global North perspectives. To actively facilitate this, workshop organizers will utilize their existing networks of accessibility researchers in the Global South to actively invite participation from these communities. The online nature of the workshop additionally affords more global participation as workshop attendees.

3.2 Facilitating Access

Our SOI Google Form will include questions about accessibility preferences to identify specific access needs and preferences prior to the workshop. Our website and all materials will be designed with accessibility in mind. This includes proper tagging and alt-text for screen reader users, as well as using clear, inclusive language throughout all communications. We will provide robust asynchrous participation options, such as the ability to continuing discussions on Discord and to leave comments on the session notes in Google Docs. This would allow participants who are unable to participate synchronously for the whole workshop, including attendees who need to take more frequent breaks, to engage more fully with the workshop.

We will coordinate with ASSETS conference organizers and accessibility chairs to arrange access services, such as professional sign language interpretation or a scribe, upon request. We aim to allow participants to join any discussion group they wish, regardless of their communication needs. However, we recognize that interpreter availability may be limited, and that if multiple participants who utilize interpreters join the workshop, there may not be capacity for them to all join separate discussion groups. We are committed to working with participants to navigate these access frictions. Additionally, we will establish discussion group norms to facilitate communication access, such as clear turn-taking, invitations to use Zoom's chat feature, designating a group member to read all chats out loud, utilizing static backgrounds, and a designated note taker. These norms and expectations will be available on the workshop website and will be discussed during the welcome in session 1.

We recognize that participants have varying communication styles and comfort levels with different forms of engagement. While we encourage active participation, we will not require verbal contributions, understanding that some attendees may prefer to engage as observers or through written contributions. Group facilitators will ensure that all specialized terminology and acronyms will be clearly explained. To accommodate participants with different backgrounds and levels of experience, we have designed flexible submission criteria that welcome contributions from researchers at various career stages and from interdisciplinary backgrounds, as highlighted in Section 6.

4 Organizers

O.1 Lloyd May is a Ph.D. candidate in music technology at Stanford University. His work centers on critical design that centers Deaf, disabled, and neurodiverse (DDN) joy in media innovations. He has experience recruiting from and working with DDN communities in the USA and South Africa utilizing a variety of research methodologies including co-design, co-composition, online surveys, and interviews. His work has been published at premier HCI and computing accessibility venues such as CHI, ASSETS, and Frontiers in Computer Science, as well as in music technology venues such as NIME. For more information, please visit https://www.lloydmay.net/

O.2 Saad Hassan is a faculty member in the School of Science and Engineering at Tulane University, where he leads the NOLA A11y Lab and is affiliated with the Center for Community-Engaged AI. His research spans accessible computing, HCI, and applied AI. He focuses on the accessibility of communication technologies, designing and evaluating linguistic and AI-based systems for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) people and sign language learners. Recently, his work has also focused on applications of AI in public sector applications such as urban accessibility. His work has been published in top HCI, accessibility, and AI venues, including CHI, ASSETS, TACCESS, NeurIPS, EMNLP, and CVPR, and has been recognized with three honorable mention and best paper nominations. He also has experience recruiting participants and collaborating with large professional organizations, such as IPSOS and the Deaf Professional Arts Network (DPAN), on industry-led projects. To see more, visit https://saadh.info.

O.3 Khang Dang is a Ph.D. candidate in Information Systems at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and a Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC). His research lies at the intersection of human–computer interaction, accessibility, extended reality (XR), and AI. Khang uses mixed-methods approaches to explore how XR technologies and AI agents can be designed to support people, especially those with disabilities. He has worked closely with the blind and low-vision (BLV) community, conducting online surveys, interviews, participatory design, and experimental studies. He has recruited BLV participants from the

United States, Canada, South Africa, and North Macedonia, with outreach support from several organizations such as the American Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind. His work has been published in ASSETS, CHI, and SUI, and he is a speaker at XR Access 2025: 3D Diversity, hosted by Cornell Tech.

O.4 **Sooyeon Lee** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Informatics in the Ying Wu College of Computing at NJIT. Her research lies at the intersection of HCI and Human-AI interaction, with a particular focus on accessibility for people with a range of abilities. Her work explores how emerging technologies can empower individuals—especially those who are BLV and those who are DHH—to access and participate in digital and real-world experiences across personal, social, and professional contexts. She is especially interested in uncovering new opportunities for innovation while addressing the challenges these technologies may pose for marginalized communities. A distinctive aspect of her research approach is her successful method of recruiting participants with disabilities through sustainable community partnerships. As an active member of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), she has developed an effective recruitment model that goes beyond traditional methods by establishing ongoing relationships with the blind community. Her research aims to make AI and other emerging technologies more accessible, equitable, and impactful for all users. She has authored or co-authored nearly 50 publications in the fields of HCI and Accessible Computing. Her work has been published in premier journals and conferences, including TACCESS, TOCHI, CSCW, CHI, ASSETS, DIS, IUI, and SUI. Her contributions have been recognized with a Best Paper Honorable Mention at CHI and a Best Paper nomination at ASSETS.

O.5 **Oliver Alonzo** is an Assistant Professor at DePaul University's School of Computing. His expertise lies at the intersection of HCI and computing accessibility, with ample experience working on technologies with and for DHH users. Broadly, his work has focused on increasing access to digital information, and centering technology design on the needs and lived experiences of people with disabilities. The technologies and contexts explored include automatic text simplification, tools for learning American Sign Language (ASL), approaches to address misinformation, and tools to increase access to multimedia for people with audiovisual disabilities. He has experience recruiting people who are DHH and BLV through local and online communities, for research in academic and industry settings. His work has been published at venues such as CHI, ASSETS and TACCESS, and received recognition such as a best paper honorable mention at CHI. To see more, visit https://oliveralonzo.com.

5 Website

We will host a website (https://assets-recruitment-2025.github.io/) that will serve as the central hub for all information, materials, and updates related to the workshop. It will provide a clear and accessible overview of the workshop, including its goals, themes, and organizing team. The site will host the official Call for Participation with details on eligibility, submission guidelines, and deadlines, and it will serve as the portal for submitting the SOI form. Additionally, the website will outline the workshop schedule and share relevant pre-workshop materials, including optional readings, discussion prompts, and a link to join the workshop Discord server. After the workshop concludes, the site will be updated with summary notes, key discussion outcomes, and next steps for drafting a white paper collaboratively with interested attendees.

In line with our accessibility values, we will design the website for usability and inclusion. All content will follow plain language principles to ensure clarity. Visual elements will include alternative text and sufficient color contrast. Any PDFs or downloadable materials will be properly tagged to ensure compatibility with screen readers. Our goal is to make the website as easy to navigate and engaging as possible for visitors of all backgrounds and access needs.

6 Attendee Selection

Given the size of our team, the limitations of providing an accessible experience in an online format, and the need to ensure manageable group sizes for both combined and breakout discussions, we are aiming for a maximum of 30 participants. The minimum eligibility criterion for participation in the workshop is *experience recruiting human participants in at least one disability- or accessibility-related research study*. Participants who do not meet this criterion will be desk rejected.

If we receive more than 30 eligible applications, we will evaluate responses to the three main questions in the Google Form. At least two members of our team will review all form responses and rate them on 5-point scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" similar to the one used for main conference on three questions:

(1) The attendee reflected on how their prior experience aligns with the workshop.
(2) The attendee explained what they will contribute to the workshop.
(3) The attendee will contribute a diverse perspective to the workshop discussions.

In case it is needed, we will have a synchronous meeting to discuss the reviews and arrive at a final list of attendees.

7 Call for Participation

"Nothing about us without us" calls for including disability communities at every stage of computing accessibility research. Recruiting participants brings challenges around conceptualizing recruiting criteria, verification, ethics and often requires balancing between genuine inclusion and avoiding tokenism with preventing overburdening participants. This virtual workshop will focus on discussing the critical issues related to effectively and ethically recruiting participants with disabilities for accessibility research studies. We aim to critically discuss recruitment methods and models tailored specifically for participants with disabilities, how eligibility criteria are conceptualized and verified amid tensions between various disability models (e.g., discussing social, cultural, identity-based), and ethical considerations for sustainable engagement.

We will run the workshop online via Zoom across three sessions during the week of October 20–25. Participants will be selected based on responses provided via a Google Form, where they will share their experiences and perspectives related to the three workshop themes: recruitment methods, eligibility criteria and verification, and ethical and sustainability considerations. We require experience recruiting for at least one computing accessibility study. We encourage submissions from researchers across all career stages and backgrounds, with an emphasis on those representing diverse geographic and cultural perspectives and those working with smaller disability populations.

All selected participants are required to register for the workshop through ASSETS and contribute to discussions. The workshop promises an engaging and inclusive environment designed to collaboratively shape best practices in accessibility research recruitment.

Further details, including the link to the Google Form, are made available on the workshop website: https://assets-recruitment-2025.github.io/.

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