

The Web & The Digital Divide

How web standards can bridge or deepen inequality

Who is excluded?

What are the effects of exclusion?

Legacy Exclusionary Web Features

Lola Odelola - W3C Technical Architecture Group Co-Chair - Kobe 2025

``autoplay``

`<audio src="/music.mp3" autoplay> </audio>`

What's wrong with `autoplay`?

- Disorienting for people with sensoring processing disorders
- Confusing to people with cognitive disorders
- Disruptive to screen-reader user

How Was it Addressed?

- Browsers prevent autoplay
- ``prefers-reduced-motion``

``frame` & `frameset``

What's wrong with `frame` & `frameset`?

Screenreaders struggled to know which frame was in focus.

WebAIM

"Frames are no longer part of HTML. Because of limited support and difficulty in making them accessible and highly usable, frames should typically be avoided."

How Was it Addressed?

```
`<iframe title="foo">`
```

`@fontface`

What's wrong with `@font-face`?

No limit on the size of font files.

CSS Font Specification

"In cases where the font download fails, **user agents must display the text visibly**. Authors are advised to **use fallback fonts** in their font lists that closely match the metrics of the downloadable fonts to avoid large page reflows where possible."

New Exclusionary Web Features

Lola Odelola - W3C Technical Architecture Group Co-Chair - Kobe 2025

WebGPU

Lola Odelola - W3C Technical Architecture Group Co-Chair - Kobe 2025

What's wrong with WebGPU?

It's incompatible with older devices that don't have support for modern graphic APIs.

Proposed Fix

WebGPU Compatibility Mode.

CSS Carousel

Lola Odelola - W3C Technical Architecture Group Co-Chair - Kobe 2025

What's wrong with CSS Carousels?

Introduction of CSS `inert`

What's wrong with CSS Carousels?

Partial accessibility to screen-readers

Proposed Fix

Don't reimplement `inert`

Proposed Fix

Don't rely on pseudo-elements

5.44 Billion

Internet Users

7 out of 10

Of top ten countries are in the global south

1.3 Billion

Disabled people

Working **Outside** of Assumptions

Lola Odelola - W3C Technical Architecture Group Co-Chair - Kobe 2025

Societal Impact Questionnaire

"As we continue to evolve the web platform, we must consider the consequences of our work"