November 2025

Inclusive Design Index

Stadiums

Universal Design Collective

Bulman Advisory

Introduction

Designing for every body is not just a principle — it's the measure of progress shaping the future of sport.

The Inclusive Design Index: Stadiums 2025 combines research from Bulman Advisory and the Universal Design Collective (UDC) to examine how accessibility, inclusion, and the user experience is evolving in stadiums across Australia and internationally.

Drawing on data from more than 25 venues, this first edition highlights key trends, benchmarks, and aspirations shaping the future of inclusive stadium design. From seating ratios to sensory spaces, this report reveals how leading projects are redefining what it means to design for every body.

Informed by Australian Standards, Paralympic guidelines, and lived-experience insight, the Index identifies where innovations are emerging and where opportunity remains to improve inclusivity. This report transforms accessibility data into design intelligence—insight that informs policy, architecture, and human experience—setting a foundation for the coming decade of inclusive sport and public design leading into Brisbane 2032.

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Background

Globally, more than 1.3 billion people, one in six, live with disability (WHO, 2023). This figure continues to rise as populations age and awareness of invisible and neurodiverse conditions grows. Disability is increasingly recognised as part of the human experience, encompassing mobility, sensory, cognitive, and psychosocial dimensions that influence how people engage with the built environment.

In Australia, around 5.5 million people or 21.8% of the population identify as having a disability (ABS, 2022), up from 17.7% in 2018. The prevalence rises to over half (52%) among those aged 65 and older, underscoring the importance of designing environments that enable lifelong participation, independence, and wellbeing.

People with disability are significantly less likely to participate in sport and physical activity than those without only about one in four adults with disability take part in sport-related activities weekly. According to the ABS (2022), 63% of people with disability experience barriers to social and community participation, most commonly their condition, cost, anxiety, accessibility issues, or transport difficulties. Around one in three (34%) report barriers specifically to sport, exercise, or recreation, underscoring the need for inclusive design in sporting venues that fosters participation and belonging.

1 in 6
people globally live with a disability

5.5 million
Australians live with a disability

1 in 2
Australians over 65 live with a disability

25%
People with disabilities regularly participate in sport.

Inclusive Categories

This report examines accessibility across six key categories — **Mobility**, **Sensory**, **Religious**, **Family**, **Gender**, and **Animal Relief Facilities** — using both design intelligence and lived-experience gathered by UDC to measure inclusion in stadium environments.

Mobility focuses on wheelchair seating ratios, accessible entrances, lifts, toilets, and adult-change facilities, establishing how movement and physical access are supported. Sensory explores sensory and quiet rooms, reset zones, and spatial clarity for neurodiverse users. Religious considerations assess the inclusion of multi-faith prayer rooms and culturally responsive design. Gender reviews the provision of all-gender amenities and equitable access to facilities. Family reviews parents rooms and pram parking. Finally, Animal Facilities evaluate the inclusion of assistance-animal relief areas, recognising their essential role in independent mobility and wellbeing.

Together, these categories define how modern stadiums are shifting from minimum compliance to holistic, human-centred inclusion.

Mobility

Sensory

Religious

Family

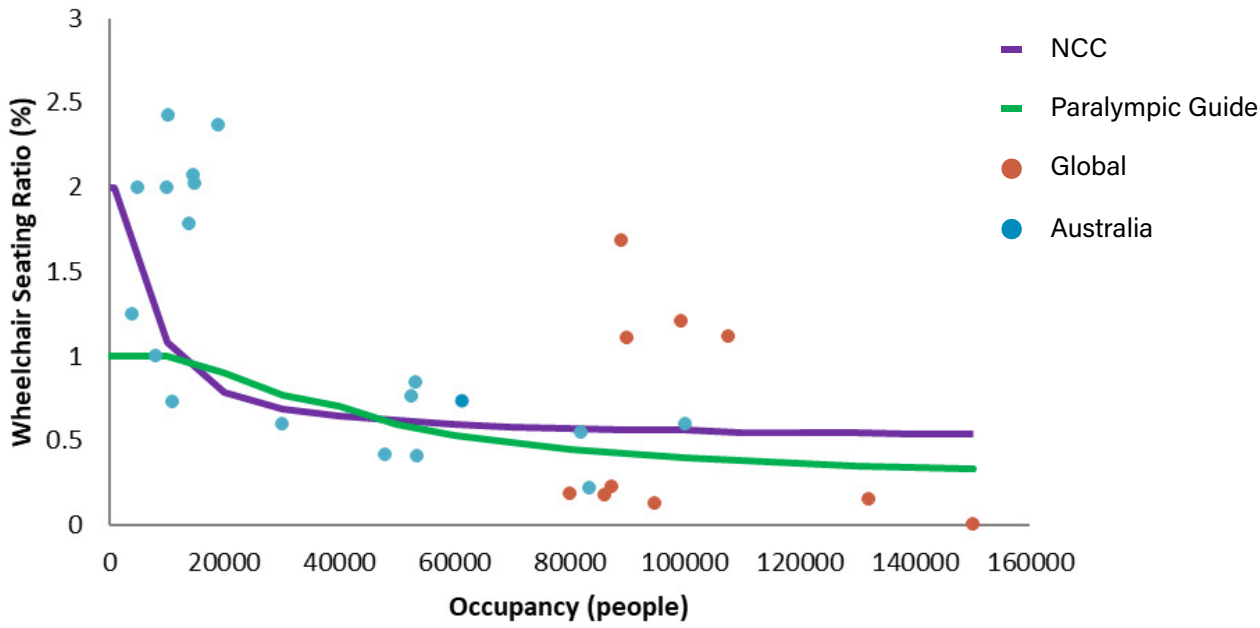
Gender

Animal

Inclusive Design Index

Mobility

Wheelchair Seating Ratios by Stadium Capacity



Top Stadiums

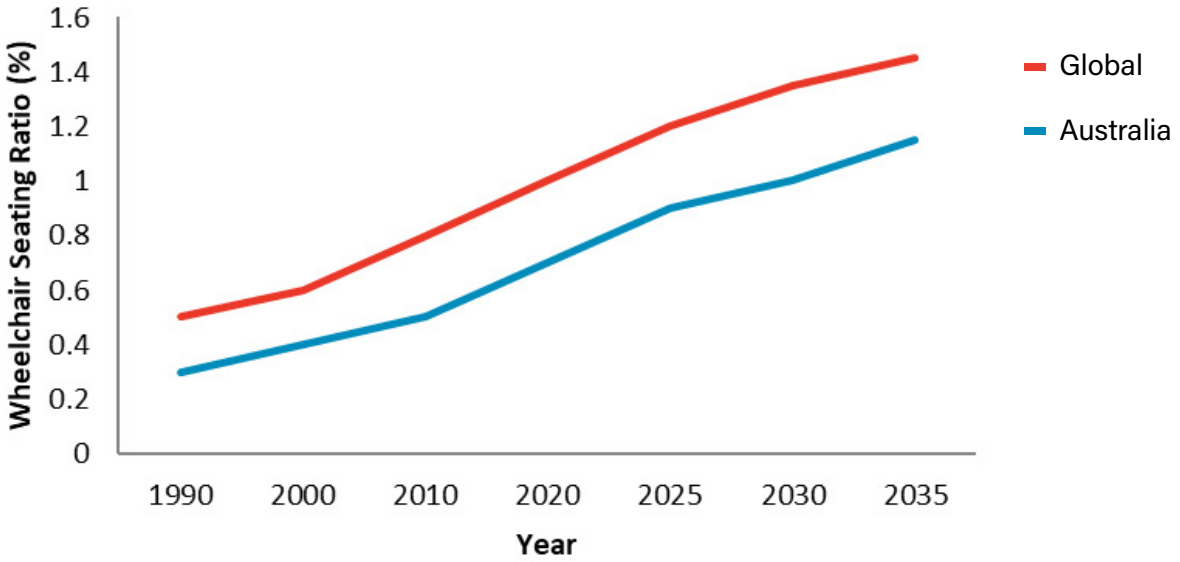
Stadium	%	Per 1000
Lusail Stadium	1.69%	17
National Stadium	1.47%	15
Stade De Fance	1.23%	12
Croke Park	1.22%	12
Camp Nou	1.21%	12
Michigan Stadium	1.15%	11
Wembley	1.11%	11
Luzhniki Stadium	0.86%	9

Stadium	%	Per 1000
Marvel Stadium	0.84%	8
Suncorp Stadium	0.76%	8
Optus Stadium	0.73%	7
MCG	0.60%	6
AAMI Park	0.60%	6
Accor Stadium	0.55%	6
SCG	0.42%	4
Adelaide Oval	0.41%	4

The graph illustrates actual wheelchair seating ratios by total stadium capacity, comparing data from Australian venues, international benchmarks, and accessibility requirements under the National Construction Code (NCC) and International Paralympic Committee (IPC) guidelines.

The analysis reviews how many wheelchair spaces are provided per 1000 seats across venues of varying scale. Smaller stadiums tend to provide higher proportional accessibility, while large stadiums often deliver lower ratios relative to capacity. This comparison highlights the gap between current practice and international best standards, underscoring the need for proportional, scalable design solutions to ensure equitable access across all seating capacities.

Wheelchair Seating Ratios by Stadium Capacity (Avg) Trends



Australia		Global	
2020	0.7%	2020	1.0%
2025	0.9%	2025	1.2%
2030	1.0%	2030	1.4%
2035	1.2%	2035	1.5%

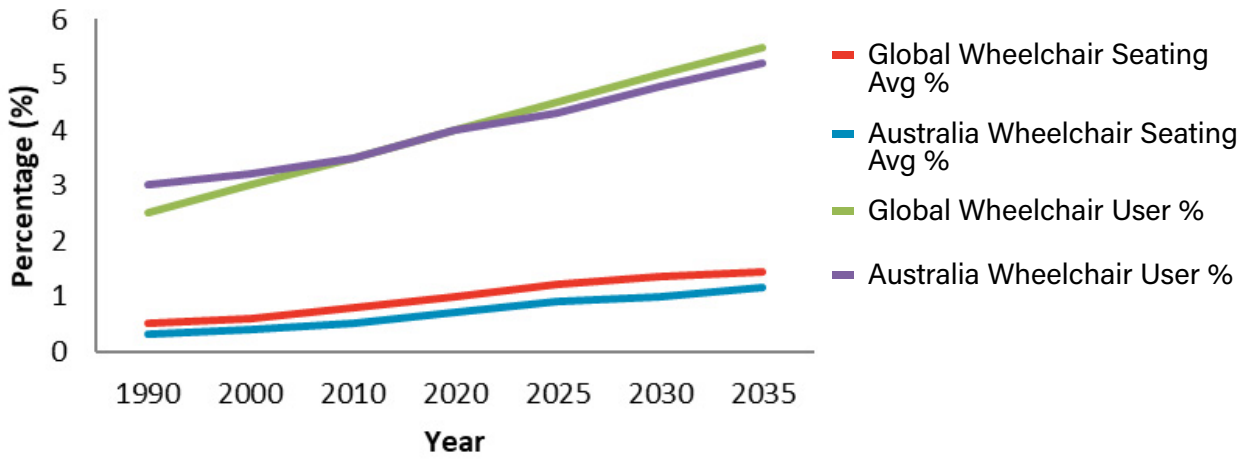
Across both Australian and international venues, the data shows a gradual increase in wheelchair seating ratios relative to total capacity, reflecting growing awareness and stronger accessibility standards globally.

Globally, most stadiums constructed or redeveloped since 2010 now provide 0.8–1.2% of total seating for wheelchair users, with leading venues such as Lusail Stadium (Qatar) and Wembley (UK) reaching above 1.5%. By contrast, older venues—especially those built before the 1990s—average closer to 0.4–0.7%, showing that ongoing retrofits are critical to achieve equitable access. Based on current trajectories, global averages are projected to reach 1.3–1.5% by 2035, with new international standards pushing for higher proportional inclusion.

In Australia, ratios currently range between 0.4% and 0.8% across major venues such as the MCG, Optus, and Accor Stadiums. Smaller and recently upgraded stadiums already exceed 2%, showing national leadership in adaptive, multi-use design. The Australian average is projected to reach 1.0–1.2% by 2035, aligning with both the NNC's proportional requirements and global inclusive design expectations.

Together, these trends indicate a clear shift from minimum compliance toward proportionate, scalable access models, ensuring stadiums of all sizes provide equitable spectator experiences by 2035.

Global and Australian Disability & Wheelchair User Trends



The data highlights a widening disparity between the growth of people requiring wheelchair access and the rate of accessible seating provision in stadiums. Globally and in Australia, the number of wheelchair users is projected to rise steadily — from around 3–4% of the population today to more than 5% by 2035 — driven by population ageing and higher disability identification rates.

In contrast, stadium wheelchair seating ratios remain significantly lower, averaging 0.8–1.0% in 2025 and expected to reach only 1.3–1.5% by 2035. While progress is evident, this growth lags far behind community need. Without stronger proportional design requirements and retrofit strategies, large venues risk underserving a growing segment of the population.

Average Accessible Entrances

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
30%	39%	33%	60%	40%
67%	50%	-	57%	65%

■ Australian Stadiums ■ Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia).

Under the NCC, large public venues such as stadiums and arenas are required to ensure that at least 50% of all entrances are accessible to people with disability. This provision recognises the scale and complexity of major venues and aims to ensure equitable entry and movement across multiple access points.

In comparison, the IPC Accessibility Guide specifies that the main public entrance must be fully accessible, ensuring direct and inclusive access to primary spectator areas and event functions.

Together, these standards set the foundation for universal access to stadiums, ensuring equitable arrival and entry experiences across local and international benchmarks.

Average Lifts

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
8	6	7	7	6
9	4	-	15	9

■ Australian Stadiums ■ Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia).

Under the NCC, public buildings such as stadiums and arenas must provide accessible vertical circulation to all levels that are open to the public, ensuring equitable access between concourse, seating, and amenity areas. Where multiple spectator levels are provided, lifts or equivalent accessible routes must serve the same destinations as stairs and escalators.

In comparison, the IPC Accessibility Guide requires that all primary spectator areas, including seating tiers, hospitality zones, and media facilities, are connected via accessible lifts or ramps. This ensures seamless vertical access for wheelchair users, people with mobility impairments, and service animals.

Together, these standards establish a shared objective to make vertical movement within large venues inclusive, efficient, and equitable, supporting universal access across every level of the spectator experience.

Average Accessible Toilets

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
50	30	40	50	35
37	60	-	35	38

Australian Stadiums Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia).

Under the NCC, stadiums and large public venues are required to provide accessible sanitary facilities proportionate to capacity and distributed across all spectator levels. This ensures that people with disability have equitable access to toilets without excessive travel distance or reliance on limited locations. The NCC also requires that accessible toilets are located on accessible routes and designed to accommodate independent use, mobility aids, and carers where necessary.

In comparison, the IPC Accessibility Guide specifies that accessible toilets must be located near all primary seating areas, entrances, and concessions, with ratios that reflect overall spectator capacity. It also encourages the inclusion of universal and family-friendly amenities, such as companion restrooms and adult change facilities.

Together, these standards establish a framework for dignified, convenient, and equitable sanitary access, ensuring every visitor can participate fully and comfortably in the stadium experience.

Average Adult Change Facilities

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
1	1	2	1	1
2	1	-	1	1

Australian Stadiums Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia).

Under the NCC, large public venues such as stadiums and arenas are required to include at least one adult change facility where toilets are provided for the public. These facilities must be designed and equipped to meet the needs of people with high or complex support requirements, including an adult-sized change table, ceiling hoist, and sufficient circulation space for carers. The NCC emphasises that adult change rooms should be positioned on accessible routes and integrated into the broader sanitary network of a venue, ensuring equitable access across all spectator levels.

In comparison, the IPC Accessibility Guide promotes the inclusion of multiple adult change facilities in large-capacity or multi-level venues. These should be located near key spectator zones, first aid stations, and family amenities to support ease of access and privacy for users and carers.

Together, these provisions represent an evolving standard for dignity in design, ensuring that people with profound disabilities — and their carers — can safely and comfortably participate in major events without barriers to basic personal care.

Sensory

Sensory / Reset Room Occupancy Numbers

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
*	*	*	*	*
8	12	-	*	8

Australian Stadiums Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia). * Unknown Amount

The NCC does not currently require the inclusion of sensory or reset rooms within large public venues. While existing accessibility provisions focus primarily on mobility and physical access, there is increasing recognition that neurodiverse and sensory-sensitive patrons also require supportive environments that enable comfort, regulation, and participation during events.

The IPC Accessibility Guide encourages the integration of quiet or sensory rooms to assist spectators who may experience sensory overload, anxiety, or other cognitive challenges. These spaces should be clearly signposted, easily accessible, and located close to spectator areas, providing a calm and secure environment for individuals and families to self-regulate before returning to the event.

As venue design expectations evolve, sensory and reset rooms are increasingly regarded as an essential element of inclusive and neuro-affirming design, expanding accessibility beyond physical mobility to encompass the broader spectrum of human experience.

Note: * in the dataset indicates that occupancy numbers for sensory/reset rooms are currently unknown across global stadium benchmarks.

Religious

Multi Faith Room Occupancy Numbers

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
0	4*	2*	3*	1*
8	12	-	50	1

■ Australian Stadiums ■ Worldwide Stadiums (Excluding Australia). * Room Amounts

The NCC does not currently mandate the inclusion of multi-faith prayer rooms within stadiums or large public venues. However, as awareness of inclusive design continues to evolve, there is an increasing expectation that major facilities provide spaces that support independence, dignity, and participation for all users.

Multi-faith prayer rooms are emerging as a key feature of inclusive and culturally responsive venue design. Although global data does not yet capture occupancy rates, industry best practice suggests providing at least one multi-faith room per major stadium, designed for flexibility and privacy across different faith traditions.

These rooms should be clearly signposted, acoustically separated, and located on accessible routes near family or quiet zones. Their design should accommodate varying practices, including ablution facilities, orientation considerations, and movable partitions, ensuring all users can observe prayer or reflection in comfort and dignity.

Note: * in the global dataset refers to the number of dedicated multi-faith spaces provided, not occupancy numbers.

Together, these provisions reflect a growing commitment to universal and faith-inclusive design, supporting participation and belonging for spectators of all backgrounds and beliefs.

Family

Average Parent Rooms Numbers

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
18	12	6	24	18
12	6	-	24	12

Australian Stadiums Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia).

The NCC does not specifically mandate the inclusion of parent or family rooms within stadiums or large public venues. However, as attendance by families with infants and young children continues to grow, there is an increasing expectation that major venues provide safe, private, and accessible spaces to support feeding, changing, and caregiving needs.

Parent rooms are now recognised as essential amenities that promote comfort, dignity, and inclusion for families attending large-scale events. The IPC Accessibility Guide recommends that family-friendly facilities, including parent rooms, companion restrooms, and adult change spaces, be integrated throughout spectator areas. These facilities should be clearly signposted, located along accessible routes, and designed with flexible layouts that accommodate diverse family structures and carer requirements.

Planning benchmarks in this study are based on an average occupancy of six adults per parent room, excluding infants. This approach supports consistent, data-driven planning and aligns with emerging international trends toward family-inclusive design, ensuring all spectators — including parents, carers, and young children — can participate in events comfortably and equitably.

Average Pram Parking Numbers

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
30	19	13	45	27
2	0	-	0	2

Australian Stadiums Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia).

The NCC does not currently specify requirements for dedicated family or pram-parking bays within stadiums or large public venues car parking. However, as families with infants and young children increasingly attend major events, there is a growing expectation that venues and surrounding precincts provide clearly designated, accessible, and secure parking bays for parents and carers transporting prams.

These bays enhance safety and convenience by reducing the need to navigate long distances or steep gradients while manoeuvring prams and young children through car parks. The IPC Accessibility Guide promotes family-inclusive design, encouraging venues to integrate family and pram-friendly parking near primary entrances, accessible routes, and parent-room facilities.

Such bays should be well-signposted, located on level, barrier-free routes, and designed with adequate width and transfer zones to accommodate both vehicles and prams. Together, these emerging expectations reflect a broader shift toward universal design and inclusive family access, ensuring that large public venues are not only accessible but also safe, practical, and welcoming for families with infants and young children.

Gender

All Gender Toilet Allowances

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
0	0	10	0	3
10	0	-	0	2

Australian Stadiums Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia).

The NCC does not currently require the provision of all-gender or gender-neutral toilets within stadiums and large public venues. However, as understanding of gender diversity grows, there is an increasing expectation for public environments to provide inclusive sanitary facilities that ensure safety, dignity, and comfort for all users. Many new or refurbished venues are now incorporating all-gender amenities as part of broader universal design strategies that promote equity and reduce barriers to participation.

The IPC Accessibility Guide supports the inclusion of inclusive and flexible toilet design, encouraging venues to consider privacy, accessibility, and safety for all visitors. This includes the integration of all-gender toilets alongside accessible and family-friendly facilities to ensure equitable access and choice for every user.

Together, these principles reflect a global movement toward inclusive and identity-affirming design, ensuring that everyone — regardless of gender — can use public facilities with confidence and respect.

Assistance Animals

Assistance Animals Relief Areas

Below 79,999	80,000 - 89,999	90,000 - 99,999	100,000 +	Average
0	0	0	0	0
0	0	-	0	0

Australian Stadiums Global Stadiums (Excluding Australia).

The NCC does not currently require the provision of assistance animal relief areas within stadiums or large public venues. However, as awareness of inclusive design grows, there is an increasing expectation that major facilities accommodate the needs of people who rely on guide, hearing, or support animals for independence and mobility.

Many existing venues only provide suggested relief areas outside the stadium, typically in nearby green spaces or parklands. While these areas may meet basic needs, their external location can create significant barriers for patrons who must exit and then re-enter the venue—often requiring a ticket re-swipe or security clearance. This process can cause unnecessary inconvenience and, in some cases, deter attendance by patrons who use assistance animals.

The IPC Accessibility Guide recommends that major venues include dedicated, accessible assistance animal relief areas within or immediately adjacent to the stadium footprint. These spaces should feature suitable ground surfaces, waste facilities, drainage, and signage, and be located along accessible internal routes that enable quick and dignified use without leaving the secure zone.

Together, these provisions represent a shift toward fully inclusive venue design, ensuring that patrons accompanied by assistance animals can participate in events safely, comfortably, and without undue restriction or disruption.