

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN USE THE CANADIAN SURVEY ON DISABILITY DATA

Data and measurement are valuable tools for employers. Long-term consistent measurement of employee data can improve a company's decision making and ability to meet business goals. However, understanding how a company is doing in a broader context, and in comparison to others in its sector, requires consulting external data sources.

What is the CSD?

If you are an employer looking to improve your employment of people with disabilities, the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) is the best source of external data we have. Conducted every 5 years following the census, the CSD gathers information from Canadian youth and adults whose daily activities are limited due to a long-term condition or health problem.

How Employers Can Use CSD Data

If you are already tracking demographic data within your own workforce, you can compare your internal statistics on disability with national or provincial data collected through the CSD, to assess performance and set targets. The CSD can provide data on the incidence of different types and severities of disability by province, labour force participation rates, and employment rates of people with disabilities by sector and province, as well as common requirements for accommodations at work. As of 2022, the CSD will also collect information on accessibility, which is hoped will support employers in complying with Federal and Provincial accessibility legislation.

Where to Find the Data and Using Different Formats

All of the CSD data is available on the StatCan website in a variety of formats. Depending on your goals as an employer, you may rely more heavily on one source or reference data in several different ways.

Tables

CSD data tables are one of the most customizable ways to access the data and can be used to generate different statistics for Canada or individual provinces. For instance, the [“Labour force status for persons with disabilities aged 25-64 years, by disability type \(grouped\)” data table](#) can pull up the number of people in each province with a certain type of disability, how many are in the labour force, and how many are unemployed. Such tables can provide important metrics to gauge how your company is doing in a broader context.

As an employer, you can reference data related to Labour Market Availability in order to inform your D&I targets, as you aim to build a representative workforce. You can also see [Canada-wide data for your industry](#), in order to compare your performance against competitors’. If you want to access industry data specific to your province, it is possible to submit a paid request for this information.

Infographics

StatCan also uses the CSD data to produce infographics that provide a snapshot of patterns to help educate the population on how disabilities manifest in the real world. The infographics are a quick way to absorb key pieces of information and can easily be used in your internal presentations to staff and leadership.

As an example, the recent [2020 infographic “Canadians with mental health disabilities”](#) overviews trends in employment prevalence by province, and types of support most often sought out by Canadians with a mental health related disability.

Reports

The [Canadian Survey on Disability Reports](#) take an in-depth look at a specific issue. An advantage of consulting reports is that they include an interpretation of the data and the trends it shows. In particular, employers might be interested in reports such as [the report “Workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities in Canada, 2017.”](#) The report outlines the rates at which accommodations are requested and met, as well as the most common types of accommodations requested. Such information could be of use to employers who are planning their approach to hiring people with disabilities.

Things to Keep in Mind

If your organization is already asking staff if they identify as having a disability, it's important to note that StatCan determines a survey respondent's disability status without asking them to self-identify. Through a series of questions on a respondent's experience of barriers to their full participation in society, the CSD determines whether or not an individual is counted as a person with a disability. Employers, on the other hand, typically use a self-identification method (i.e. asking directly whether or not an employee has a disability) when measuring for disability in their workforce.

The difference in methodologies may result in discrepancies between your survey results and CSD results. Employee data may appear lower, because people may not consider themselves to have a disability or be unwilling to disclose their status to their employer. As you build trust within your organizational culture and conduct consecutive annual surveys, your internal data will become a more reliable source to use for planning purposes.

While the CSD can be a valuable source of data for employers like yourself, its usefulness is also limited by the frequency of surveying. While most organizations are working off quarterly and annual business cycles, the CSD is conducted every 5 years. The most recent data we can access is from 2017 and we will not have updated information until 2022.

The lack of up-to-date government collected data is a key reason why employers need to be gathering their own data. It's also a key reason the Presidents Group has launched our Pledge to Measure—an effort to encourage employers across the province to measure and report publicly the number of people with disabilities they employ.

[Join our newsletter for updates on the Presidents Group's Pledge to Measure initiative.](#)