

Make it Count

Measuring for Disability
Inclusion in Your Workplace



relationships and create social connections. Create Employee Resource Groups to provide support. Identify unofficial leaders and influencers and recruit them as champions. Offer more opportunities for staff to connect with leadership. Build staff and leadership awareness about diversity and inclusion. Create Employee Resource Groups to resources for groups like people with disabilities, then leverage them on the survey. Align your measurement initiative with your organizational strategy. Articulate the business case for measurement of disability and refer to it in all communications. Build staff and leadership awareness to create space for discussion. Communicate how measuring for disability aligns with your organizational values and present the goals of your measurement initiative. Demonstrate senior leadership's support for your diversity and inclusion initiatives in tangible ways. Educate your HR or diversity and inclusion team on disability, and spread that knowledge throughout your workforce. Use it as an opportunity to establish a culture and report back to underscore the value of your measurement initiative. Explore creative ways to build measurement into other processes. Be transparent about how information will be used and processed. Adhere to strict data protection standards and communicate those to employees. Collect anonymous data to ensure employee response cannot be traced back to them. Ensure participation is voluntary and you have a 'decline to answer' option. Survey annually to capture changes in disabilities in your workforce. Sync your Return to Work programs with your measurement initiative. Educate staff on disability to improve their understanding of whether or not they should self-identify. Conduct testing on the wording of questions and definitions to ensure inclusivity. Respect the choice of employees to self-identify or not. Build relationships and create social connections. Create Employee Resource Groups to provide support. Identify unofficial leaders and influencers and recruit them as champions. Offer more opportunities for staff to connect with leadership. Build staff and leadership awareness about diversity and inclusion. Create Employee Resource Groups to resources for groups like people with disabilities.

SECTION TWO

Measuring for Disability Inclusion

02

Why are we measuring for disability?

Isn't it enough to hire people with disabilities? Why are we measuring too? There are both business and social benefits that come out of your organization's choice to measure for disability...

On the business side...

Evidence-based business

You have probably heard the Peter Drucker quote: "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." And if something is important to your business, you want to be able to improve it.

Long-term consistent data gives organizations the ability to make informed decisions and meet their business goals. For instance, it is standard for businesses to track quarterly profits to help their leadership and staff make decisions that help maximize those profits. Based on the numbers, businesses might choose to double down on a successful marketing campaign or to stop manufacturing a product that is consistently not selling. The same logic should apply across their operations. If, like us, you have a business goal to hire more people with disabilities, keeping track of how many people you have on staff who identify as having a disability will help you meet that goal.

The data collected through a measurement campaign can inform the creation and implementation of a diversity and inclusion strategy and later, evaluate its effectiveness. Knowing your baseline numbers can, for

instance, reveal whether a newly introduced initiative to recruit people with disabilities was successful or whether your team needs to make adjustments to it. The data can also give your company insight into the gaps and inequalities that exist in your workplace.

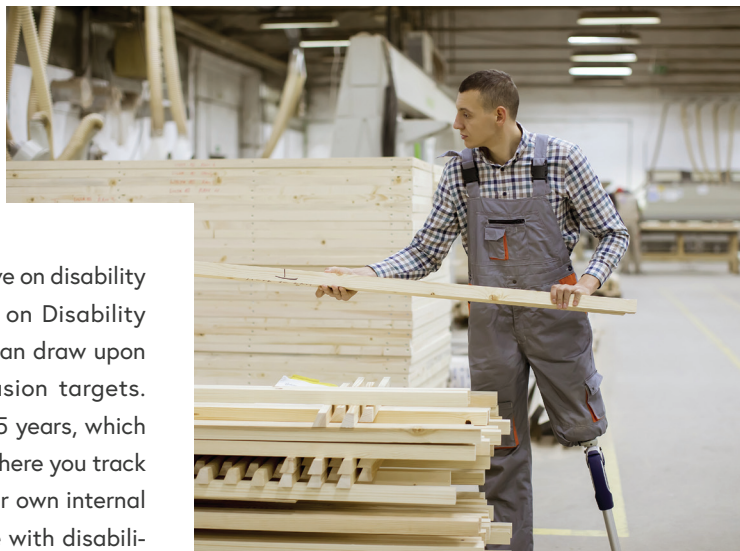
If you measure it, you can manage it. If you take the extra step to report publicly, there's a level of transparency and accountability that drives business to deliver better results.¹⁷



Fill gaps in data

The best external source of data we have on disability employment is the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). Among other uses, employers can draw upon that data to set diversity and inclusion targets. However, the CSD is conducted every 5 years, which is less relevant to a business context where you track year-over-year metrics. Generating your own internal data on employment equity for people with disabilities provides you with more freedom on the timelines and types of data collected. Data driven by internal priorities and measurements will be more accurate and relevant to your organization.

Most importantly, businesses are measuring because the existing data is poor and at best, infrequent. Consequently, those who measure are taking the lead in an area where the government has not met the needs of the business community. To be truly data driven organizations, we cannot refer to labour market reports or wait years for the next set of CSD data. We need regular, reliable data, and by measuring and reporting publicly, we can help fill that gap.



Demonstrate your commitment

The federal government and many provinces in Canada now have accessibility legislation on the books. Following the 2019 Accessible Canada Act, the BC Government passed the Accessible BC Act in spring 2021. Over the next decade, the Accessible BC Act will develop accessibility standards in a number of areas including communications, service delivery, built environment, education and employment.

Measuring your efforts to employ people with disabilities is a clear way to model a commitment to accessibility from an employment perspective. Phasing in a measurement initiative now will help your organization get ahead of this legislation and demonstrate a pre-existing commitment.

Improve organizational culture

There are a number of other benefits you can achieve by measuring disability. In fact, a measurement initiative itself presents an opportunity to improve your organizational culture. On the communications and cultural side, the act of collecting demographic data about your workforce and reporting back on how it is being used sends a message to staff that diversity and inclusion is a priority for your organization.

The key is to clearly communicate *why* you are collecting the data and what you plan to do with the information you gather. Asking questions and listening to your employees is a foundational part of building a high trust culture. Employers who engage staff in an authentic way and listen well receive a high return on investment with their measurement campaigns.

Similarly, employees voluntarily disclosing an invisible disability can enhance coworker relationships, because of the level of trust suggested by sharing one's lived experience.¹⁸ Such vulnerability can prompt social change within the workplace and create a shift to more supportive attitudes and behaviours.

Build your competitive advantage

Measuring for disability is also a great thing for your competitive advantage. If you are looking to differentiate yourself from your competitors, why not gather numbers that prove you're leading your industry in employing people with disabilities? Your measurement initiative can be an opportunity to move into a leadership position in your industry, because numbers talk.

In the first year of our Pledge to Measure, 110 senior leaders from our 21 participating companies self-identified as having a disability. The number shows that our community of employers in BC is a global leader in disability inclusion.

In contrast, a recent report found that there were *no* "executives" or "senior managers" who self-identify as having a disability in the 100 largest companies in the U.K.¹⁹

A verified commitment to diversity has been proven to help your brand. It attracts ethical consumers and better talent. In fact, 67% of job seekers consider a potential employer's commitment to diversity in their job search.²⁰ It also encourages other employers to try to catch up to the new norms you have established, giving rise to broader change.

On the social side...

Not only does measuring for disability have the potential to benefit your business, it can also have a positive social impact by supporting the movement towards accessibility and inclusion. That is a powerful argument given that more businesses are reflecting on their ability to positively impact their communities than ever before.

Ultimately, every organization's "why we measure" is going to be a little bit different. The members of the Presidents Group, for instance, have committed to a Big Hairy Audacious Goal: that by 2030, we can measure that British Columbia is the province with the highest employment for people with disabilities in Canada. While we often have our own unique organizational goals and use the data in different ways, we share a strong motivation to measure that more and more people with disabilities in BC have appropriate employment that fulfills their work potential and the needs of our labour market.



Raise awareness

As a collective, we recognize there are important benefits that a movement to measure can achieve for the public. Measurement is considered an important step towards the full participation and integration of people with disabilities into the labour market.²¹ Data helps to raise awareness and identify trends that improve employers and policymakers' understanding of the issues faced by people with disabilities, as well as how best to address them. The collection and sharing of data helps shape evidence-based policies aimed at improving the employment outcomes for people with disabilities.²²

Join the movement to measure

The decision to measure the number of people with disabilities employed in our organizations is an important one for employers, and navigating the process can be complex. However, measurement also presents a ripe opportunity for peer learning in the business community. Employers seeking to improve or launch a new initiative can learn from each other's experiences, as Presidents Group members have in our Community of Practice.

Among the 25 companies in the Presidents Group, there are organizations that have been measuring for years, and those that are just getting started in their journey to measure. (Five companies shared that they were measuring disability for the first time because of the Pledge to Measure!) All are willing to share what they have learned, and the practices they have developed, to encourage you to join them in their Pledge to Measure.

In the first year of our Pledge to Measure campaign, our participants' nearly 50,000 employees were given the opportunity to complete a survey asking their disability status. An average of 17.1% of their workforces²³, including 110 senior leaders, chose to self-identify as having a disability when surveyed. Given that 12.7% of BC's labour force has a disability, our baseline data shows that, as a group, our community is doing better than the labour market participation rate.²⁴ In fact, some of our members had over 70% of their employees self-identify as having a disability on their survey!

Pledge to Measure Data At A Glance.²⁵

21

Employers participated in year one of the Pledge to Measure

49,792

Total number of employees at time of survey

1,899

Total number of employees who self-identified as having a disability

110

Total number of senior leaders who self-identified as having a disability

[For more 2021 data from the Pledge to Measure, check out Appendix A.](#)

²³ The median for year one is sitting at 6.1%. Companies with quite high percentages brought up the overall average.

By measuring and contributing your data to a public initiative, like our Pledge to Measure, your organization is demonstrating the value and importance of data to support the disability community.

Combat stigma

Stigma around the capacity and employability of people with disabilities has been one of the greatest barriers to their ability to secure employment in the first place. Data from employers provides more concrete evidence that people with disabilities make valuable contributions to their workplaces. Your company's choice to measure and report on your numbers can be an act of solidarity and advocacy against such stigma and exclusion.²⁶

By publicly sharing that your company employs people with disabilities and finds it important enough to measure, you encourage other companies to do the same. You also provide an example on how it can be done. Such leadership is important because it lifts up more companies and more individuals than your company alone could employ.

Spur innovation

Given the established link between diversity and innovation, when we improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities, consumers can benefit from products and services that meet their needs in novel and exciting ways. Getting new perspectives in the room that reflect the lived experience of different parts of the community creates more room for debate and exchange, which is proven to lead to better ideas and solutions.

²⁵ Participants in the Pledge to Measure included 19 President Group members and 2 members of the Community of Accessible Employers, TransLink and BCLC.

Who are the leaders in disability data?

Businesses leading the way in measuring for disability are motivated by two key drivers: regulation and values.

The regulatory driver mostly applies to federally regulated companies, which are required to measure and report on employment equity data for four designated groups: people with disabilities, women, Indigenous peoples, and members of visible minorities. Federally regulated industries, including the federal public service, crown corporations, as well as the banking, communications, and transportation industries, employ about 6% of all Canadian workers.²⁷

These companies are required to submit reports based on their employee surveys, which must comply with the federal language and requirements. They also submit an employment equity plan based on their current numbers. The plan outlines how the company will adjust their policies and work towards employing each designated group at a rate that corresponds to their representation in the available Canadian workforce. For these companies, measuring and reporting are mandated practices. However, many federally regulated companies have risen above compliance and developed progressive diversity and inclusion programs and practices.

Federal contractors are also required to measure and report on employment equity data under the Employment Equity Act.²⁸ Any company seeking a federal contract over \$1 million will need to commit to implementing a measurement, reporting, and goal setting initiative around employment equity. Having a measurement initiative already in place can be not only clear proof of your commitment to employment equity, but also a competitive advantage in securing those contracts.

The other key driver of best practices in disability measurement and inclusion is organizational values. For companies with strong community relationships or socially responsible brands, surveying and measuring is voluntary, but many see it as essential to their brand. Without the formal mandate, values driven companies have more flexibility in their methods and in what they measure. For example, some companies are including LGBTQ2S+ and gender identity questions in their surveys. Surveying provides an opportunity to practice an open and curious culture, and public reporting extends the values of transparency and accountability.

How we gather data

Whether an organization is motivated by regulatory compliance, company values, or a strong desire to do the right thing—measurement presents an opportunity to develop a data set that can be leveraged towards meeting business goals. But what does gathering data look like in practice?

Companies measuring disability representation in their workplaces use a self-identification model. In this model, staff members complete a survey which asks them to voluntarily disclose whether or not they identify as having a disability. Many companies ask new hires to complete a demographic survey as a part of their onboarding—but as we will discuss later on, the best practice is to survey your employees annually.

Data collection practices vary significantly depending on the organization. Some employers choose to contract a third party to design and administer their survey, whereas others manage the whole process internally. The best choice depends on the organizational context and considerations such as internal HR capacity, budget, and the presumed level of organizational trust.

The survey could be administered using a paper ballot, online using an internal HR platform, or through a

third party platform. The focus of the survey might be entirely on disability or it might be integrated into a broader diversity and inclusion strategy that takes into account various aspects of identity; such as gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

Companies measuring for disability representation in their workplaces use a self-identification model. In this model, staff members complete a survey which asks them to voluntarily disclose whether or not they identify as having a disability.