



Tracking Diversity in the B.C. Sport Sector

Research Report

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Report Context

Why this report?

In recent years, there has been a growing need and desire for organizations to prioritize diversity and inclusion¹. While this priority has been building for some time, the year 2020 was a catalyst for change. From the inequitable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on certain racialized communities² to social justice responses to incidents such as the murder of George Floyd and the discovery of unmarked graves of residential school children³, the need to address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion are more important than ever. The increased concern with social equity has reached all corners of the public and private sectors. Organizations are expected to incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion into their organizational strategy. Those who fail to do so risk losing customers, partners, and potential employees^{1,4}.

The B.C. Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture's *Pathways to Sport* report states that participation in sport can "create safer, more diverse and inclusive communities"⁵. However, it is well documented that sport participation is not equally accessible to all residents of Canada. Participation rates are often found to be lower among women and girls, Indigenous

peoples, individuals with a disability, recent immigrants, and members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, to name a few⁶.

An increasingly common strategy to advance diversity, equity and inclusion efforts – within and beyond sport – is through data collection. In a 2022 viaSport sector survey, when asked what types of data collection would be helpful to them, the majority of respondents identified demographic data related under-represented groups⁷. This demonstrates the B.C. sport sector's desire to use data collection to support their diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies.

With that said, there are some challenges to navigate when it comes to using data metrics as a tool to support DEI. While data can be a powerful tool to advance DEI efforts when it is done well, it can be ineffective or even harmful if it is not managed appropriately. Data collection without a clear rationale, strategy, and associated action plan is unlikely to lead to tangible progress^{1,3,8}.

In summary, many organizations recognize that it is good practice to collect demographic data to advance diversity, equity and inclusion, but working with data

can feel overwhelming. Some organizations might not know where to start. What data should be collected? How should it be collected? What should be done with the data once it has been collected? Each organizational context is different, so there is not one 'right' answer to these questions. But, some broad guidelines can help organizations to develop a plan that suits their unique environment. This report draws from a variety of expert sources to outline why it is important to use data for DEI strategy, how to decide what data should be collected, and best practices for how to manage this data.

Method

This report is informed by a literature review of more than 20 sources including research reports, business reports, webinars, and blog posts focused on tracking data metrics for the purposes of advancing DEI efforts. Approximately half of the reviewed literature is sport-specific, while the other half comes from business, government, healthcare, and consulting. The landscape of diversity, equity and inclusion is rapidly changing and in a state of constant evolution. As a result, most of the sources reviewed for this report were written in the last three years, in an effort to ensure information is current. Most of the reviewed literature is from a Canadian context. Select international sources were included that have particular relevance to the topic.

Tracking Diversity: The “Why”

Before diving into the details of how to collect data, it is important to understand ‘the why’. Why is it important to track diversity and measure the organization’s

progress? Why is data collection an essential tool? Answering these questions can help steer the organization’s strategy and get all relevant stakeholders on board.

Why is it important to measure diversity?

The importance of measuring diversity can be broadly understood through two main arguments: the ethical case and the business case. The ethical case, quite simply, suggests that prioritizing diversity in an organization is morally and ethically ‘the right thing to do’^{9,10}. Our society as a whole is beginning to acknowledge the long history of systematic inequities in Canada² across all sectors, including sport. In sport, organizations that demonstrate diversity and inclusion can benefit from increased growth and connectivity in their sport community⁶. However, the sport sector has not always collected demographic data. This means that existing insights related to the impact of racial identity, geography, household income, and other factors on access and inclusion are yet to be fully understood³.

The business case demonstrates how diversity can have tangible

benefits for the organization. For example, research has found that people care about diversity and inclusion. Organizations that embody those values might be more attractive to new members, bringing in a greater number of new participants, employees, or volunteers from a more diverse pool^{6,11}. Further, organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion have been found to experience higher engagement among participants and employees, enhanced brand reputation and public support, and increased sponsorship opportunities^{1,6,11}. Statistics from the private sector show that companies with a diverse workforce are up to 20% more innovative⁹ and that 95% of organizations’ senior leaders believe that diversity positively contributes to innovation, creativity, and problem solving¹¹. Sport-specific research shows that inclusive sport organizations benefit from better governance and risk management, as well as

improved capacity to meet the goals of strategic plans and required regulations⁶.

The B.C. Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture's *Pathways to Sport* strategic framework identified tracking results and measuring progress a key priority for 2020-2025. The strategic framework outlined targets to achieve gender

equity, however they acknowledged that other diversity metrics were not yet being tracked. The strategic framework addresses the need to establish baselines to develop additional targets for sport participation rates and high-performance athletes⁵. In order to understand the starting point, the sport sector needs to advance its data collection strategy.

Why is data collection important?

We've outlined the benefits of tracking diversity, but why is data collection an important tool in this equation? Data collection helps organizations to evaluate their current environment, identify strategies and targets, and monitor their level of success over time. It allows organizations to develop a clear picture of their starting point, to develop evidence-based strategies and identify where additional time and resources might be required¹², and to provide tangible results that demonstrate the impact of DEI initiatives and strategies^{9,13,14}.

Measuring the current state of an organization or sector is critical in order to identify targets and goals for the future⁹. The use of data informs effective decision-making because decisions are evidence-based. In other words, the organization can make decisions based on what they *know* is happening, rather than what they *think* is happening. In-depth data collection, such as surveys or focus groups, allows organizations to better understand the experiences of marginalized groups, which can help to create programs and initiatives that will increase inclusion^{2,8}. Collecting demographic data

alongside allows organizations to better understand perspectives that might otherwise be hidden by the majority³. For example, if only 2 out of 20 survey respondents report low levels of inclusion in their sport, the organization may read this as a positive statistic. However, if it is identified that these 2 participants are the only racialized individuals out of the 20 respondents, this statistic becomes much more significant.

Second, data helps with organizational efficiency and resource allocation⁸. When organizations take the time to understand the communities that they are working with, they are more likely to make decisions that will be successful and impactful¹⁵. This saves time and resources that might otherwise go to piloting and revising plans multiple times before finding an appropriate strategy.

Third, data collection can improve stakeholder buy-in to support diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. By making systemic inequities more visible and sharing progress and results of DEI initiatives, stakeholders and members of the organization are more likely to understand the value and embrace DEI efforts^{8,14,15}.

Tracking Diversity: The “What”

Once an organization has made the decision to track diversity, the next big step is figuring out what type of data to collect. It's important to ensure that the organization's data collection strategy aligns with their

goals and outcomes. This section will begin by outlining the different types of data that organizations can collect, followed by a framework to help organizations decide what type of data collection is best for them.

What type of data can organizations collect?

The different types of data collection can be broadly divided into two categories: quantitative data and qualitative data. This section introduces these two data

collection types, along with disaggregated data (a sub-category of quantitative data). The purpose and function of these types of data is outlined below.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data provides information through statistical quantities, amounts, or ranges. Most quantitative data collection includes measurement units or statistics that are associated with the data⁹. Common quantitative data collection methods include surveys or questionnaires with multiple choice questions, sliding scales, or comparisons. Quantitative data aims to *define* an issue, identifying exactly where problems exist and what needs to be addressed⁹.

One of the keys to collecting data

for diversity and inclusion is the use of quantitative data to measure demographic information. The process of collecting demographic information is referred to as disaggregated data collection. Disaggregated data is defined as “data that is separated into subcategories of information (e.g., First Nations, Metis Nation, Inuit, Black, etc.) from more general categories (e.g., race, ethnicity)”¹⁵. This type of data collection is often used to identify an individual's racial or ethnic identity, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation, to name a few.

Collecting demographic data can help an organization to identify where gaps exist in diversity efforts and where to focus their diversity and inclusion strategies. However,

in order to address gaps in a meaningful way, it is important to understand why they exist, which is where qualitative data collection can come in handy.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data provides descriptive information with the objective of understanding people's experiences, feelings, behaviours, and social relationships^{9,16}. Qualitative data collection often involves an interactive approach between the researcher and participant, collecting long-answer data. Common methods of qualitative data collection include interviews, focus groups, and digital methods, such as online discussion boards¹⁶. Qualitative data collection also includes long-answer survey questions.

In research aiming to measure diversity and inclusion, qualitative data is useful to gauge the experiences of diverse members of an organization in relation to the broader membership. This can help organizations to measure how well they are doing at fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment. In short, qualitative

data provides contextual information and description of an issue without using statistical measurement. It is often recommended to use both quantitative and qualitative data metrics in order to obtain a complete understanding of an issue and how to appropriately address it¹⁹. In sport, organizations might consider using a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures to gain insight into the following topics:

- **Participant engagement and belonging**
- **Number of new participants and retention of existing participants**
- **Organizational attitudes**
- **Level of engagement with community partners**
- **Feedback on inclusion efforts, cultural sensitivity, and gender equity⁶**

What strategies can organizations use to decide what data to collect?

Even with a solid understanding of the different types of data collection, deciding what data to collect can be a complex task. There is no 'one size fits all' strategy when it comes to the type of data an organization should collect, as it depends on a variety of factors:

- **What is the organization's purpose for collecting data?**
- **What areas of DEI is the organization hoping to address**
- **What are the desired outcomes or goals in relation to the organization's DEI strategy?**

While there may not be a simple solution, research has found that disaggregated data is a powerful tool to advance DEI efforts, so long as it is combined with a clear strategy and process that will lead to actions and initiatives to increase diversity and inclusion^{12,15,17}. Organizations can improve their chances of a successful DEI initiative by taking an intentional and systematic approach to decision-making. For organizations that are looking to advance their DEI strategy and inform program development through data collection, the British Columbia Office of Human Rights Commission outlines a three-step framework to help guide each organization's data collection strategy¹⁴. Grounded in respectful relationships and community collaboration, they recommend

developing a strategy by identifying:

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- 1. The purpose**
 - 2. The process**
 - 3. The tool**
-

These steps should be read as a starting point to get organizations thinking about their data collection and diversity initiatives in an intentional way. Depending on the scope of the initiative and the capacity of the organization, some may choose to scale this framework in order to best meet the needs of the organization and its membership. While these steps are introduced in order, the framework is likely to be non-linear and steps will require re-visiting throughout the process.

1. The Purpose

The first step in this framework is to define the purpose of the project or initiative that the organization is collecting data for. This involves identifying what equity-related goals the organization hopes to achieve¹⁴. Once this is established, the organization should consider what kind of data will be most meaningful, who the key stakeholders are that will be most interested in the results of the data collected, and what insights the organization hopes to gain from the data collected⁹.

In a report written for Sport Canada, a number of ideas for action are identified for

organizations to increase sport participation among underrepresented groups. These include ideas related to program development, access to sport, community partnerships, and representation of diversity. The ideas for action outlined in this report provide a good starting point for sport organizations to generate ideas around their DEI goals and purpose. Review [the report "Policy and Program Considerations for Increasing Sport Participation Among Members of Underrepresented Groups in Canada"](#) for a list of ideas related to DEI initiatives for sport organizations.

2. The Process

The next step is to outline the process of the project or initiative from start to finish. The B.C. Office of Human Rights Commission recommends adopting the grandmother perspective when collecting data related to underrepresented groups. The grandmother perspective comes from a place of caring rather than control and centers on the importance of community relationships¹⁵. Organizations should start by identifying which communities are impacted by the project or initiative in which the data collection will occur, and involve these communities in the development of data collection tools. It is important that the process includes collaboration with impacted communities throughout the data collection process^{2,15}.

A critical step in the process development is building a tracking system into the data collection process. Monitoring and tracking data is necessary to assess whether the project or initiative is meeting the goals and outcomes defined in the purpose^{6,15,18}. This will allow the organization to measure their progress and determine if any change is needed in their strategic direction. In order to successfully evaluate progress, it is important to begin with an understanding of the organization's 'current state'. This involves collecting baseline data to understand where the organization is starting from. By understanding the organization's current state (where are you today?), they can set goals and targets for their 'future state' (where do you want to be?)^{9,15}.

3. The Tool

Finally, once the organization has a clear purpose and process established, they can determine the most appropriate data collection tool(s) that will allow them to meet their intended purpose. This should be done through collaboration with the impacted communities¹⁵. When selecting data collection tool(s), the organization should consider how the data will be used and what information will be communicated to the broader community^{2,15,18}.

Once data has been collected, the next step is analyzing and communicating the results. The Sport Information Resource Centre recommends forming a summary of data to help identify trends, challenge or support assumptions, and understand where further data is needed⁸. The organization is responsible for communicating the results of collected data to relevant stakeholders and community members^{15,18}.

Tracking Diversity: The “How”

The final section of this report describes some of the best practices for tracking diversity metrics. These best consider

the entire data collection process, with a particular focus on collecting disaggregated demographic data.

What are some best practices for tracking diversity metrics?

Based on literature from the sport sector, healthcare industry, government, and business, the best practices for tracking diversity metrics have been combined and summarized into four key points. In tracking diversity metrics, organizations should be:

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1. **Collaborative**
 2. **Respectful**
 3. **Transformative**
 4. **Transparent**
-

Each of these key points are described in detail below.

1. Collaborative

At every step, organizations should reflect on which communities are impacted by their diversity initiatives and make every effort to actively involve these communities. The [Anti-Racism in Sport guidelines](#) recommend establishing an advisory committee to formally involve and meaningfully engage relevant community members¹⁵.

Organizations should consider ways to collaborate with the community on the development of data collection tools and decisions around strategic priorities^{2,6}. To reiterate, the key to establishing collaborative relationships is approaching these initiatives from a place of care, not control¹⁴.

2. Respectful

Regardless of the data collection tool(s), tracking diversity metrics should always be rooted in respectful

relationships. Relationships with and potential impact on the affected communities should be at the forefront of the

organization’s data collection planning, particularly when collecting disaggregated data^{14,15}. Ensure that the information gathered is necessary and appropriate. When deciding what type of data to collect, consider how each selected question or tool will contribute to the organization’s DEI strategy and objectives. Reflect on any potential harm that the

selected questions could have on members of the community¹⁴.

One harm-reduction strategy is to be intentional and specific in the language surrounding the organization’s selected questions^{9,14,20}. Use the following guidelines when developing questions related to demographic data:

- Wherever possible, provide participants with the option to self-identify when asking identity-related questions such as gender and racial identity^{9,13,14}.
- When asking participants to disclose sex or gender¹, ensure that you understand the difference and choose based on need for the information. Standards for gender classifications as used by the Province of British Columbia²¹ are outlined below.

Table 1 Standards for Gender Classification

Classification	Marker	Description
Man/Boy	M	Cisgender and transgender persons who self-identify as man or boy.
Non-Binary person	X	Persons who self-identify as non-binary (i.e., not exclusively man or woman), this includes but is not limited to Two Spirit, agender, gender fluid as examples.
Woman/Girl	W/F*	Cisgender and transgender persons who self-identify as a woman or girl.
Prefer not to answer / Unknown	U	Persons whose gender is not known at the time of data collection because the person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prefers not to answer • is unable to answer • is unsure • data is missing

*The “F” marker may be needed to accommodate legacy system integration but, when possible, should be replaced by “W”.

- Avoid using ‘other’ as an option. This can be very harmful to gender diverse individuals as it is literally ‘othering’ them and it does not provide specific information to the organization. Provide a space to self-identify and/or the choice to not answer¹⁷.
- If data collection requires that the participant provide their legal name, include a box for preferred name for any participants who do not go by their legal name.
- Be careful not to conflate distinct identity categories. Identity factors that should be considered separately but are often mistaken as interchangeable are race and ethnicity, and gender identity and sexual orientation. When collecting this demographic information, make sure to ask about these identity factors separately.

- The following figures provide best practice examples of collecting demographic data related to race and Indigeneity². These standards were developed by the Canadian Institute for Health Information and can act as a starting point for organizations who wish to collect this type of data.

Race-based data standard

Table 2 Race-based data standard

Question: In our society, people are often described by their race or racial background. These are not based in science, but our race may influence the way we are treated by individuals and institutions, and this may affect our health. Which category(ies) best describes you? Check all that apply:†

Response category	Examples
Black	African, African Canadian, Afro-Caribbean descent
East Asian	Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese descent
Indigenous (First Nations, Inuk/Inuit, Métis)‡	First Nations, Inuk/Inuit, Métis descent
Latin American	Hispanic or Latin American descent
Middle Eastern	Arab, Persian, West Asian descent (e.g., Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian, Kurdish, Lebanese, Turkish)
South Asian	South Asian descent (e.g., Bangladeshi, Indian, Indo-Caribbean, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
Southeast Asian	Cambodian, Filipino, Indonesian, Thai, Vietnamese, or other Southeast Asian descent
White	European descent
Another race category Optional – please specify: [open text]	Includes values not described above
Do not know	Not applicable
Prefer not to answer	Not applicable

Notes

* The collection of race-based and Indigenous data should involve community engagement to mitigate the risk of harm to individuals and communities, and to ensure the safe and appropriate use of the data.

† Individuals who identify as mixed race can select all categories that apply.

‡ Distinctions-based approaches – that is, separately identifying First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples – may be preferred.

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Indigenous identity data standard

Table 3 Indigenous identity question and responses*

Question: Do you identify as First Nations, Inuk/Inuit and/or Métis?

Response categories (select all that apply)
Yes, First Nations
Yes, Inuk/Inuit
Yes, Métis
No
Do not know
Prefer not to answer

Notes

The implementation of the Indigenous identity data standard should include data governance agreements, engagement with Indigenous groups, and processes related to culturally safe and appropriate data collection.

Following the data collection process, it is important to respect the impacted community in data analysis. Analysis should also consider the impact of intersecting identity factors^{3,14}. For example, let's say an organization collects data on gender and racial identity. Data analysis should consider how these identity factors interact with each other, rather than looking at these identity factors as separate and unrelated. The final aspect of respectful relationships in data collection

is maintaining privacy and confidentiality¹⁴. All individuals who take part in data collection activities should have confidence that their data will remain confidential and that they will not be identifiable in the results shared back to the community. This helps to protect the participants from any unintentional harm and it builds trust between the community and the organization. It is the organization's responsibility to ensure systems are in place to protect participants' information.

¹ Sex and gender are separate but related concepts. Sex refers to an individual's biological (physical and physiological) features. Sex is usually categorized as male or female, although the variation in an individual's biological attributes does not always fit within these two categories. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, expressions and identities attributed to girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse individuals. Gender expression and identity can be fluid and is not confined to the binary of girl/woman or boy/man. For a full description of these concepts, see the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

² Organizations that are collecting data related to Indigenous identity should be familiar with and understand the implications of the OCAP principles (ownership, control, access, and possession).

3. Transformative

The notion that tracking diversity metrics should be transformative essentially means that the organization is collecting data with a clear purpose and objective^{9,13}. In other words, once data has been collected, the information obtained should positively contribute to the organization's DEI efforts. In order to achieve transformative data collection, organizations must take a systematic approach to tracking diversity metrics⁴. The points outlined below will help organizations to track diversity metrics in an intentional and systematic way.

The first step is to analyze the current state of the organization or sector, depending on the scope of evaluation. This means collecting data based on the organization's current position and in relation to the sector, often referred to as benchmarking. Benchmarking provides baseline information that will allow the organization to track the progress of their strategy or initiative^{5,9,15}. To measure the current state, the organization can use existing tools such as the [Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmarks](#) as a starting point.

4. Transparent

Finally, the organization must be transparent when tracking diversity metrics, particularly when they are working with demographic data. The organization should apply principles of informed consent to their data collection tools.

Once the organization has their baseline data, the next step is to schedule regular and consistent data collection to measure the organization's progress^{9,12}. The timing and frequency of data collection will depend on the nature of data being collected.

The final step of transformative data collection is evaluation and feedback. Organizations should provide opportunities for participants and community members to provide feedback on the organization's DEI strategies^{1,15}. In addition, it is crucial that once strategies or initiatives are in place, these new strategies are evaluated and additional feedback is collected from the community to assess the success of the organization's strategy^{6,14}. This is important because it allows the organization to measure whether their chosen strategy is having the intended outcome. It provides guidance for the organization to adjust or modify their strategy as needed¹. By tracking diversity in a systematic way, the organization can ensure that their data is being used to inform strategic action.

- **What is the organization asking about this?**
- **How will data be used?**
- **Where will it be stored?**
- **Who will have access**

Other elements of informed consent include using plain language when developing questions. This provides clarity to the participant and ensures that they understand the questions being asked¹². It is also important to clearly indicate if and when questions are optional. When it comes to collecting disaggregated demographic data, it is best practice to make these questions optional by including 'prefer not to say' as one of the options^{13,15}.

An essential element of transparency is the continued involvement and dialogue with participants and relevant stakeholders. This includes consulting relevant community members on interpretation and strategic actions that come out of the data collection activities^{2,14}. Organizations should also consider how the results and progress of their strategies and initiatives will be communicated back to participants and relevant stakeholders¹⁸. Ultimately, the organization should prioritize communication and engagement with the community throughout the duration of the process.

Endnotes

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