

How to gather workforce diversity data

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“In the UK, data gathering to report on the gender pay gap is creating an important annual opportunity to check in on one key measure of diversity and equality progress at the individual company, sector and national level. As awareness of the commercial and societal benefit of broader workplace diversity grows, with a particular focus on ethnicity and social mobility, the requirement for companies of a minimum size to report on progress looks set to increase, so I would advise companies to get on the front foot and establish good data collection practices now.”

Nero Ughwujabo

former Special Advisor to The (British) Prime Minister

Committing to collecting workforce diversity data is the first step. What comes next?



Data gathering is an important part of meeting your organisation's goals around Diversity, Equality & Inclusion (DE&I) & the process can seem daunting. Here are some common concerns around collecting diversity data

Getting started

*We want to collect workforce diversity data. **We've never done this before. Where do we begin?***

Go to **Strategy** – 3

Securing buy-in

*There is resistance at all levels of the organisation. Some don't trust how their data will be used & others find employee data surveys ineffective in bringing about change. **How can we persuade everyone to contribute?***

Go to **Communication** – 4

Collecting data

*We don't yet have the tools in place to collect data. **What software should we use? What should we consider when dealing with personal and sensitive DE&I information?***

Go to **Tools** – 5

Analysing

*I have collected a lot of data and I'm unsure what to make of it. How can I **safely draw meaningful statistical conclusions?** How do I go beyond the surface?*

Go to **Tools** – 5

Following up

*We have collected and analysed data. **What's next?** How do I ensure this isn't seen as a tick-box exercise?*

Go to **Strategy** – 3

Data Collection Strategy: It shouldn't be a one-off event

Data collection is crucial part of your wider DE&I strategy. Data are useful to expose an issue and garner attention - after all, what does not get measured does not count.

1. Planning

Review existing data collection tools and **select** survey tools – your HR system may already have this functionality

Agree time and resource commitment

Decide minimum number of responses required, for the survey to be valid

Consider using smaller survey groups if a full-company survey is impractical. Shorter, more frequent 'pulse' surveys can also be effective

Be aware of the need for anonymity, voluntary engagement and giving time during work day to participate

2. Data collection / analysis

Agree the specific metrics to gather data on - start small and build it up

Disaggregate data where possible while being mindful of anonymity

Consider what existing data from HR systems or other sources could be anonymised and used to enrich analysis

Have a data/statistics expert on the team to help analyse raw data

Take stock of the status quo - and be prepared to share it, no matter how bad

Recommend actions based on the results of the analysis

3. Follow-through

Set up a data collection schedule, annual or otherwise – it's not a single exercise and should be ongoing

Determine who will have access to the data, how this will be controlled and how this is justified

Agree a communications plan for both internal and external audiences



Tools to get you started

- Template D&I surveys and tips from [Survey Monkey](#) and [Typeform](#)
- [Lloyds Data Collection Toolkit](#) (15 page pdf)
- ['How to collect and use diversity data'](#) by the Arts Council (6 page pdf)
- [Quick guide to getting employee surveys right](#) and how they so often go wrong by Officevibe
- Software that can facilitate regular, anonymous employee surveys and feedback include [Officevibe](#), [Lattice](#) and [Peakon](#)
- [Glossary of D&I terms](#) by Hive Learning
- [Strategy Template](#) by eSynergySolutions

Communication: Show employees you're listening

Communicating what we're doing around DE&I is no longer optional. Transparency is key. Don't let gaps in communication get filled with opinions and hearsay.

Approach

Create a plan on what, why and how things will happen around the survey

Establish frequency of comms and clear responsibilities

Launch a campaign people can easily buy into, using simple language i.e. 'You said - We did'

Train managers to handle direct communication with their teams and offer support

Typical push backs

Senior management:

We've never done this before – show them evidence on why this is important (i.e. improved employee engagement and retention, gains in innovation and revenue) and the risk of NOT doing this.

No budget – utilise internal expertise, run the process in-house (with time allocated to it) and make use of free survey platforms (e.g. Google Forms).

Colleagues:

I don't trust the process / anonymity – limit access to raw data on a need-to-know basis. You can also make sensitive questions optional.

Is this a vanity exercise? – Be clear about the purpose and the bigger picture, communicate regularly before/during/after the survey. Be specific about what changes you will make as a result of the survey findings.

What will be done with my data? – Ensure you present colleagues with a clear statement on data collection & management (see examples).

Communication examples

- Stonewall Cymru guide to why participation in data gathering matters; ['What's it got to do with you?'](#)
- How Monzo explains why, what and how DE&I data is handled in an [update](#)
- Youth Music talking about [how and why](#) it uses data collection to track diversity
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission talking about its diversity stats and difficulties in handling small sample sizes in its [annual report](#) (p 57-59)
- [Template data privacy and handling statement](#), designed to be used alongside a survey



Tools & How-to's: Key points to consider

Working with large amounts of sensitive data can be daunting. Here are some tips from teams that have gone through the exercise and made the mistakes, so you don't have to!



Culture change

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of one or more protected characteristics. Among other cultural reasons, this is a big reason collecting diversity data is considered taboo with **employers feeling that it is too intrusive and employees do not want to share this information***. However, the collection of data itself is not illegal and this sort of view may counter DE&I improvement efforts and should be challenged.

Before you begin

Review different areas of diversity data and intersectionality

Determine the right number of questions for your organisation (start small, i.e. 10 questions)

Have a one-pager data collection strategy to follow and refer to

Make sure you have general data points such as role / seniority / length of service to explore correlations – there maybe an unrelated factor affecting where diversity is, rather than a result of direct bias

Prepare a plan of action to use in case response rates are too low

After you receive data

Ensure **anonymity** by further removing any data points that could identify individuals before sharing for analysis

Enlist support from colleagues or external to help analyze data thoroughly

Avoid immediately jumping to cause and effect relationships based on initial stats

Be aware that percentages lie – look for statistical significance and trends in open questions

Communicate about your efforts regardless of the current situation (progress over perfection)

Toolkit

- [Sample size calculator](#) for figuring out how many people you need to complete your survey for a representative sample by SurveyMonkey
- How to [frame a difficult diagnosis](#) when you're not quite where you want to be yet - by Sustainable Brands
- Industry benchmarks – [Gender Pay Gap](#) and [Ethnicity Pay Gap](#) from Office of National Statistics, Tech Talent Charter [Diversity in Tech Report](#)
- [Guidance](#) on the different areas of diversity data by Advance HE
- [Entry](#) and [exit](#) interview templates that could be used alongside DE&I surveys by SurveyMonkey

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<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/measuring-and-reporting-on-ethnicity-and-disability-pay-gaps.pdf>

The team that helped put this pack together



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Sei is a Product & Strategy Consultant who helps start-ups and established companies overcome their digital challenges. She believes in the power of diversity and is passionate about tackling underrepresentation in tech.



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Aiste is a Data Specialist at the University of Bath. She is part of EDI team and supports institutional activities around gender equality. Aiste is on a mission to change the image of what a data scientist looks like and does.



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Kunjal is co-founder of LT Harper, a cyber focused recruitment & staffing business. Since starting the company she has been a passionate advocate of helping improve ED&I in the cyber sector.



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Sari is a Director of People and Culture with a background in product design and consulting, bringing user-centred, Lean Agile approaches to her team's practices. She is a part of D&I working group at Red Badger and leading data collection and analysis initiatives. And yes, she loves spreadsheets.



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Harriet is a Diversity and Community Manager at eSynergy Solutions. Harriet helps organisations engage with diverse technical communities to raise their profile and share their story. She is also passionate about raising awareness on diversity, belonging and inclusion and supports organisations on their diversity and inclusion journey. She is the organiser of the Beequal meetup and Diversity Advocate winner of the Future Stars of Tech 2019, finalist for Women in IT Awards: Rising Star 2020, shortlisted for TechWomen100 2020 and featured in the 2020 Dots 100 trailblazing women redefining the creative industry.