

Engage Pillar

Inclusive Data Collection

The Inclusive Employers Standard is built upon six pillars of inclusion, which serve as its framework. These pillars—Engage, Equip, Empower, Embed, Evaluate, and Evolve—determine the success and impact of inclusion efforts within the workplace.

To support organisations at all stages of their inclusion journey we run a panel event series where we focus on one pillar at a time. Out of these events we have produced a suite of resources sharing insights and experiences on a specific topics.



The Engage pillar explores how well you know who your people are and what they need from the organisation. As well as how you engage all staff with inclusion through communication and collaboration. In this resource we are going to explore data.

Data should underpin every inclusion decision, but often many organisations aren't sure where to start with data collection. Firstly it is important to understand there are two different types of data and they both have their strengths when it comes to informing decision-making:

Quantitative data is, quite simply, information that can be counted or measured and given a numerical value, such as length in centimetres or revenue in pounds. If you have questions such as “How many?”, “How often?” or “How

much?”, you'll find the answers in quantitative data. You will collect a huge amount of quantitative data in your organisation, such as diversity data, sickness rates, flexible working requests, attrition rates, internal promotions, and more.

Qualitative data involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. This can be collected using employee forums, in meetings, interviews, or even through open text questions in surveys.

Quantitative data is good for spotting patterns and qualitative data can be used to get a deeper understanding of the context, causes, and effects of those patterns. In isolation, they both have their strengths and weaknesses, but together they provide a really strong evidence base for decision-making.

Navigating diversity data collection within a restrictive HR system



Sara Packwood (she/her)
Global DEI and Wellbeing Lead

Problem

BMT is a global maritime-orientated engineering and design firm that like many other organisations embarked on the journey of collecting and understanding diversity data across their organisation. For BMT they knew that to progress their DEI plans and for DEI to become a true enabler of their business they needed to understand their workforce and equity across the employee journey through DEI insight. BMT had only ever collected snapshots of DEI data through surveys which did not enable them to integrate that data/look at their diversity against organisational demographics e.g. by business area, career level etc.. and at key stages of the employee journey e.g. promotion, development, attrition etc. In addition, they couldn't really understand their baseline for DEI as an org and truly measure progress. BMT at the time was implementing a new company system and at the time to add

DEI questions as part of this implementation was not feasible and could not be globally enabled - so they conducted an analysis of all available options.

Solution

BMT knew the long-term solution ideally was to collect DEI data within our company system - yet this was not a viable solution for the medium term. To address the challenge and to move forward BMT landed on the decision to build an in-house diversity data monitoring app using SharePoint. This approach allowed them to collect diversity data confidentially (through pseudonymisation) whilst still being able to link this data to other organisational/people data through a generated unique ID number. BMT's approach was future proof as it could allow for the data to be migrated into the company system further down the line without re-collecting.

BMT launched a data campaign which consisted of:

1. Self-ID diversity demographic questions in the in-house SharePoint app – Quantitative piece of the puzzle
2. Inclusion Gallup Survey – asking questions relating to inclusion and belonging – feelings and perception which is the Qualitative piece of the puzzle.

Impact

This approach allowed BMT to start collecting DEI data globally which once they gain over 60% participation will allow them to have an emerging DEI picture, compare workforce diversity across markets and industries, assess the progression of different diverse groups, assess the turnover of staff across groups, and identify groups who are less comfortable disclosing their DEI information. Additionally, it will help BMT to understand more about e.g.

groups experiencing higher levels of absenteeism, stress or bullying, facing disproportionate disciplinary action, and explore their representation at different levels.

Sara's Top Tips:

- Talk about data so it is at the forefront of people's minds, meaning they understand how it is relevant to both the organisation and them as an individual.
- Transparency builds trust. Share examples of how you use data to progress workplace inclusion.
- Don't forget the importance of qualitative data to add further value and insight to your qualitative data. It also sends the message that you are not using the quantitative data as the whole story but gaining the deeper context beyond the numbers –we are all humans and data should never replace talking to people about their experiences and feelings.

“BMT has been working with Inclusive Employers as a corporate member for several months now as well as partnership on various different projects including our DEI audit looking at our DEI Strategy and equity across our employee journey as well as some work within the space of Gender Identity and Trans Inclusion. BMT really values the expertise and structure which IE is bringing to our work.”

Sara Packwood
Global DEI and Wellbeing Lead
BMT

Embedding data literacy and oversight at all levels of the organisation

**BAXTER
STOREY**



Lyndsey Oliver (she/her)
Head of ED&I

Problem

BaxterStorey is an independent hospitality provider that completed the Inclusive Employers Foundation in 2024. They have faced significant challenges around collecting diversity data as they are part of a larger multi-organisation group. Their HR, legal, and IT systems and infrastructure all sit at a group level, but their inclusion and culture work sits at an organisational level. This complicates the issue when exploring data collection because any changes to the HR system or data collected require approval at the group level from all organisations.

Solution

The solution was two pronged. They worked with representatives across the group to help inform and influence changes to the current approach to diversity data collection through their ESG Inclusion by Design group. Simultaneously, they were looking to develop the different data collection approaches that were operated at organisational level, including quantitative data such as cultural assessment survey, absence reporting, menopause reporting, and uptake of different team member benefits, as well as qualitative data collection such as leavers interviews, belonging insights, and ESG quarterly reporting.

Impact

By supporting people across the group to understand the relevance of diversity data to both organisational culture and business performance, it became easier to advocate for and positively influence any decisions made in relation to diversity data collection through the group HR system. Additionally, collecting a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data outside of HR data allowed BaxterStorey to explore the wider organisational picture through quantitative data as well as a more detailed individual context through qualitative data.

Lyndsey's Top Tips

- Start somewhere, it's better than nowhere.
- Have clarity on your why. Why are you collecting this data, how will you use it, if you have no intention of using it then think twice about collecting it.
- You will be challenged, over and over. Know where to persist and know when to let go.
- Diversity data collection takes time. Focus on progress not perfection.
- Don't forget about all the other types of organisational and people data you collect and report on (e.g. through staff benefit providers).

“Going through the IE Foundation Assessment was really useful at both providing re-assurance where we are on the right path, as well as providing guidance and direction as to what else we need to focus on.”

Lyndsey Oliver
Head of ED&I
BaxterStorey

Building trust

and

understanding through a data



storytelling

campaign



Rachael Atherton (she/her)
Equality Diversity & Inclusion
Manager

Problem

People for Places, a UK-based property development organisation that completed the Inclusive Employers Foundation in 2023. As a large organisation with over 20 businesses under the Places for People umbrella, their diversity data faced inconsistencies and significant gaps due to multiple HR systems. These systems emerged as the business grew over the years through mergers, which has further complicated their ability to maintain a cohesive and comprehensive dataset.

Solution

A group-wide diversity data campaign was launched in September 2024, to increase overall colleague diversity declaration rates. The campaign, in partnership with the internal communication team, urged colleagues to go into their relevant HR system and update their diversity details via self-service. The campaign stressed the importance of this activity by linking positive EDI outcomes to insight gained from the diversity data held. It also looked to reassure colleagues about the storage, security, and use of their data. Senior leadership were very involved in supporting and disseminating the campaign's key message through a variety of different methods (emails, newsletters, posters, [videos](#), and conversations in team meetings).



Want to learn more?

Email us at standard@inclusiveemployers.co.uk

Impact

The campaign resulted in a 13% increase in overall diversity declaration from a starting position of 38% rising to 51% at the end of the campaign. This diversity data campaign was about more than just numbers—it was about building trust and demonstrating the value of the data to their colleagues. By showing how this information could drive meaningful change, they were able to reassure colleagues about the process and encourage participation. The success of the campaign reinforced that clear communication, strong leadership, and a focus on trust are essential to engaging colleagues in EDI initiatives.

Rachael's Top Tips

- Make your communication around data personal and relevant to the individual
- Leverage leadership support and include leaders from the start.
- Use multiple communication channels to share messages about data.

“Our diversity data campaign was about more than just numbers—it was about building trust and demonstrating the value of the data to our colleagues.”

Rachael Atherton (she/her)
Equality Diversity & Inclusion Manager
People for Places

Your Questions Answered

As part of the event senior inclusion and diversity consultant Olivia Banton, and senior IES programme lead Emily Pattinson had a Q+A panel with the speakers. Attendees were invited to submit questions. Here are the answers to the most commonly asked questions.

How did you decide what diversity data to collect?



Lyndsey

It would be great if there was an industry standard, but at the moment we use a combination of census data and Inclusive Employers recommended guidance. We also get insight from our ERGs and through staff feedback.



Sara

As we are a global organisation, it was inevitable that we would not be able to ask all of the same questions in all locations so we went through a thorough exercise to assess legal and cultural considerations in each country to understand where and what we could collect. The output of our data collection will be a DEI dashboard (currently being built) so for reporting purposes we created a global mapping for questions that were similar topics but asked differently so we can compare and view global data effectively at the highest level.



Olivia

Consider what you already know about your organisation and what you would like to know. We recommend UK organisations collect; age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, gender reassignment, religion/faith and sexual orientation. You may also want to explore characteristics relevant to your location or industry such as caring responsibilities, veteran status or social mobility.



Emily

When you are exploring HR data, it is important you are collecting data in line with the legislation in your country. Legislation differs country to country so it's important to be mindful of how this differs across the sites you operate in.

What have you done to increase your disclosure rates?



Rachael

Tailor your messaging to explain why diversity data matters—not just to the business, but to individual colleagues. Highlight how this data contributes to creating a more inclusive workplace. Deliver your message through a variety of methods—emails, posters, videos, newsletters, and team meetings. This ensures you reach colleagues across different roles, locations, and preferences for consuming information.



Sara

One thing I did in a previous organisation that really made a huge difference was setting a reminder in our system around payday when they are likely to be in the HR system, as some people may not have disclosed just because they have not got around to it. At BMT we are working closely with our comms team and stakeholders to continue to push the message out there around why this matters e.g. through video, briefings, senior leadership, webinars etc.. as well as using our systems to enable reminders.



Emily

Manager cascades can be really effective if your staff are in roles where emails or online communications is not suitable e.g. frontline workers. Upskill your managers at every level to ensure they are all able to explain why data is being collected, what it will be used for and how it is relevant to their team. Often staff will be more receptive to a message when it is coming from someone familiar.



Olivia

Getting senior leaders engaged is vital. The role modelling needs to come from the top.

How do you use your data if your disclosure rates are low?



Sara

It's important to work with the data you do have but being mindful that you may not have the entire picture start. Use your qualitative data alongside e.g. through conducting focus groups, and listening circles to add further value and insight to the quant data you do have. Listening to your people sends the message that you are not using the quantitative data as the whole story but using qualitative data as a way of getting deeper context and this can build trust and transparency.



Lyndsey

We make sure to have a variety of quantitative and qualitative data. If I only took action on my quantitative data I wouldn't be able to do much. I pull from all the forms of data I have to help drive decisions. Qualitative data can also be great to help inform decisions. Start small, you don't need to take huge actions, sometimes even small actions led by data have a big impact in the longer term.



Emily

High disclosure rates take time and trust, so they are not going to happen overnight. Keep looking at your disclosure, if some characteristics are significantly lower than others this might indicate people don't understand why it is important, or don't have the trust to disclose it. 50% disclosure is good, but 75% or above is preferred as this means you have a suitable representation of your organisation. If your numbers are low it doesn't mean you cannot use the data, just keep in mind it might not be giving you the full picture. So where possible communicate this and seek confirmation from other data sources.

How do you assure people that their data is anonymous?



Emily

It is important to know the difference between anonymous and confidential. You cannot always guarantee anonymity, especially if you are collecting data through a HR system which will mean the data they disclose is connected to their personnel file. You can be clear on confidentiality by following GDPR, sharing information about how the data is used, stored and who sees it. Also, make sure you are offering a 'prefer not to say option' for all questions.



Sara

We have a diversity data protection notice and consent statement before they enter their data.



Lyndsey

We have a legal statement on the page where they share their data to show exactly how it is used, stored, etc. We also follow this up with how we use the data, your actions speak louder than numbers on their own. Action builds trust.

How do you embed accountability for diversity data at every level of the organisation?



Sara

Making sure we make it clear why it is important to the business but also why it is important to the employees individually. For leaders it is helpful to talk about how inclusion can help the organisation, but for employees it's important to show how it impacts the culture and their experience. It's also important to be clear that inclusion is not just about minoritised groups, it's about everyone and making a workplace that's right for everyone.



Lyndsey

One way we have done this effectively is to link inclusion to health and safety. Health and safety are a huge part of our industry, so I have begun trying to link health and safety with psychological safety. It's not just about keeping people's bodies safe but also their minds too, which has made a huge difference. If you show how inclusion links with other department's deliverables and areas they then take on the responsibility for delivering it and you become the subject matter expert.



Rachael

Involve senior leaders early and encourage them to actively champion the campaign. Their visible support helps build credibility and demonstrates the organisation's commitment to EDI.



Emily

Avoiding hierarchical assumptions in your questions helps to position data as an impartial evidence-base for decisions, rather than confirming existing biases. It might seem like a tiny thing, but having 'White' be the first ethnicity in the list says a lot more than you think it does.



Olivia

Get insights from your people. It is important to involve different voices in the decisions around what data you are going to collect, and how you are going to word the questions. This helps the wider organisation to feel some ownership over the approach you have selected. Set targets, if you want department leaders to take ownership of embedding data collection, try making it a performance target.

Helpful Resources

- [Diversity data monitoring form guidance](#)
- [Diversity data guide](#)