



# A Federal Data and Measurement Strategy for Accessibility 2022 to 2027





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## List of abbreviations

- AC**  
Accessibility Commissioner
- ACD**  
Accessible Canada Directorate
- ASC**  
Accessibility Standards Canada
- CHRC**  
Canadian Human Rights Commission
- CRTC**  
Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
- CSD**  
Canadian Survey on Disability
- CTA**  
Canadian Transportation Agency
- CAO**  
Chief Accessibility Officer
- CDO**  
Chief Data Officer
- DGSC**  
Director General Steering Committee
- DSQ**  
Disability Screening Questionnaire
- ESDC**  
Employment and Social Development Canada
- ICT**  
Information and communication technologies

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## 1. Introduction

The *Accessible Canada Act* (the Act) came into effect in 2019. It is designed to support the achievement of a fully accessible and inclusive Canada by 2040. The Act provides a legal framework for making progress on accessibility. It focuses on identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility in 7 key areas:

- employment
- the built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication, other than ICT
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities
- the design and delivery of programs and services, and
- transportation

The Act applies to all federal government departments and agencies, crown corporations (for example, Canada Post), Parliament and First Nations band councils. It also applies to private sector businesses that are regulated by the federal government. Examples include:

- banks
- railroads, airlines, and other transportation companies that cross provincial or international borders
- radio and television stations, and
- cell phone and Internet services

The Accessible Canada Directorate (ACD) in Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is responsible for overall implementation of the Act. This includes measuring progress in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers by regulated parties and Canadians more generally.

This Strategy explains what the Government of Canada will do to improve what is known about accessibility in Canada. Better information on barriers to accessibility will make it easier to remove them, and prevent them in the future. Greater awareness about the barriers encountered by Canadians will encourage action needed to achieve real change. Early consideration of accessibility in policy, program and service design will also promote greater inclusion over time.

The Strategy covers an initial 5-year period. This is because accessibility is a relatively new area of research. Working across a 5-year time frame will allow the



Government of Canada to leverage new data sources as they become available, and to identify the best ways to measure progress on accessibility. The goal is to see how measurement progresses over the next 5 years, and adjust the Strategy going forward, as required.

It is important to note that the Strategy does not cover information about accessibility data collection or accessibility measurement of First Nations band councils and their communities. This is because the *Accessible Canada Regulations*, which came into effect in 2021, do not apply to First Nations band councils for the first 5 years. This is to allow the Government of Canada to work with national Indigenous organizations to identify ways in which the Act can be implemented on reserve in a way that reflects the unique needs of First Nations communities.

Accordingly, this Strategy may need to be updated in the future. Any changes will be made in collaboration with First Nations organizations and will respect all principles related to data set by the First Nations Information and Governance Center.

## 2. Vision, mission and purpose

The vision of this Strategy is to provide Canadians with comprehensive information and long-term data on barriers to accessibility. This data and information will support measuring progress towards a fully accessible Canada.

The mission of the Strategy is to develop a framework for collecting and analysing information on accessibility. This will allow the Government of Canada to track, measure and report on progress in all areas under the Act. This will include measuring and reporting on Government of Canada accessibility initiatives.

The purpose of this Strategy is to:

- develop consistent methods for collecting and analysing information across all organizations under federal jurisdiction; this will ensure progress in removing and preventing barriers to accessibility by different organizations can be compared
- promote accountability to Canadians; this will be done by demonstrating how the Act is improving accessibility for all Canadians including persons with disabilities, and
- support evidence-based decision-making by ensuring knowledge is shared broadly; this will foster greater action in advancing accessibility



The data collected under this Strategy could also help Canada meet its international reporting obligations under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

### 3. Partners and stakeholders

Collecting, analysing and sharing information on accessibility involves many partners and stakeholders who may play one or more roles. Roles include: being a source of data, an owner of data, a user of information, an expert on accessibility, or any combination of these.

Key partners and stakeholders include:

- federal departments and agencies
- federal regulators and enforcement authorities including the Accessibility Commissioner
- Accessibility Standards Canada
- federally regulated businesses
- the disability community
- researchers and data experts in the disability community
- the Chief Accessibility Officer, and
- provinces and territories

ACD will work with all of the partners and stakeholders listed above to ensure a coordinated approach to the collection, analysis and sharing of information on accessibility.

#### 3.1 Federal departments and agencies

Statistics Canada is the Government of Canada's center of excellence for data and data management. Statistics Canada administers several surveys that provide accessibility data, such as the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). It also administers other surveys that can be leveraged to help us better understand accessibility and measure progress in implementing the Act.

Statistics Canada has been a critical partner throughout the development of this Strategy and will continue to play a key role in collecting and sharing information on accessibility. For example, it is currently using its expertise in data analysis to re-examine existing data sets from the perspective of persons with different types of disabilities.



Expertise on data management will also be leveraged within departments. For example, ESDC was the first federal department to appoint a Chief Data Officer (CDO). ACD will work closely with the CDO and federal partners to leverage data gathered in relation to Service Canada efforts to make the programs and services it provides on the part of the Government as a whole more accessible, and explore innovative approaches to data collection.

More broadly, the Government of Canada is committed to leading by example on accessibility and disability inclusion, and this is why the Act requires federal departments and agencies to prepare and publish accessibility plans and reports outlining the ways in which they are advancing accessibility.

Individual departments with policy areas that touch on the priority areas in the Act also play a key contributing role in gathering and analysing accessibility data. For example, Transport Canada is currently working with the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) to identify and advance data sources in the transportation sector.

Because the data needed to deliver on this Strategy will come from multiple sources, there is a need to ensure alignment across data collection and measurement initiatives. Alignment will also help drive innovation and avoid duplication of effort.

### **3.2 Federal regulators and enforcement authorities, including the Accessibility Commissioner**

Under the Act, the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) are responsible for creating regulations for the transportation, broadcasting and telecommunication industries that aim to advance accessibility in these industries. The CTA and CRTC are also responsible for promoting compliance and enforcement of these regulations.

The Accessibility Commissioner (AC) is a new position within the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC). The AC is responsible for compliance and enforcement for all other regulations made under the Act.

The AC has a number of compliance and enforcement tools at their disposal. These include inspections, production orders, compliance orders, notices of violation or contravention, and compliance agreements.

Any Canadian who may have experienced harm because of a possible regulatory violation may file a formal complaint under the Act. Depending on their nature, complaints are to be addressed by either the CHRC, the CTA or the CRTC.



Information collected by these organizations on the number and kind of complaints received will help measure progress.

At the same time, organizations can also use accessibility data to inform the policies that support their compliance and enforcement activities.

### **3.3 Accessibility Standards Canada**

Under the Act, Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) is responsible for developing and revising national accessibility standards. It also promotes, supports and conducts research. The aim of the research is to better understand barriers, which can then inform the development of standards. ASC recommends standards to the Minister responsible for the Act. The Minister may decide to adopt the standards into regulation further to the advice of ACD. Unless incorporated into regulation, standards are voluntary.

ASC reports on its activities annually. ASC activities and research are a potential source of information on accessibility. At the same time, the organization may benefit from accessibility data gathered under this Strategy in carrying out its activities.

### **3.4 Federally regulated businesses**

The Act requires federally regulated businesses to prepare and publish accessibility plans. These plans must explain how each business will identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in their operations, with a focus on the 7 priority areas set out in the Act. These organizations are also required to publish regular progress reports to describe what the organization has done to advance accessibility.

These organizations must also show how they will handle feedback on accessibility from people who interact with them. Their progress reports must include how the organization has responded to any feedback it has received.

These plans and reports will become an important source of data and information on accessibility and provide valuable information on the diverse barriers facing persons with disabilities. They will help to measure progress by showing where barriers are being removed. Organizations may also use the information in plans and reports published by others to inform future action on accessibility.



### **3.5 The disability community**

The disability community includes Canadians with disabilities and the organizations that represent them. The expertise, lived experience and diversity of the disability community make them an essential source of information. Because the disability community knows the many barriers faced by persons with disabilities in each priority area, they can help identify measures that reflect the needs and priorities of persons with disabilities. The disability community may also provide information or do research on barriers to accessibility. This also includes attitudes that act as barriers to accessibility and inclusion.

### **3.6 Researchers and data experts in the disability community**

ESDC consults accessibility researchers and experts from disability organizations on a regular basis. Through this Strategy, ESDC and its partners will continue to look to these experts for information to support implementing the Act. Information collected through the Strategy can also be used by researchers and data experts, and may lead to the identification of new ways to measure accessibility.

### **3.7 Chief Accessibility Officer**

The Chief Accessibility Officer (CAO) is a special adviser to the Minister responsible for the Act. The CAO advises the Minister on a range of accessibility issues. The CAO is also responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress made under the Act. This includes publishing an annual report that covers progress in removing barriers, and current and emerging accessibility issues.

Information and knowledge produced through this Strategy may help the CAO carry out their job. It may inform research carried out by the CAO, and support reporting.

### **3.8 Provinces and territories**

Provinces and territories may also measure accessibility using their own tailored approaches.

Information collected under this Strategy could support the efforts of provinces and territories to advance accessibility. It could also encourage provinces and territories to adopt common approaches to accessibility. This could provide a more seamless experience for persons with disabilities across Canada. At the same time, information collected by provinces and territories could inform federal efforts to advance accessibility.



## 4. Foundational work

Work on accessibility data and measurement started in 2019. An important early step was establishing a partnership with Statistics Canada. This was followed by talks with other federal partners. ESDC also consulted the disability community and academics involved in research on accessibility. These discussions helped to develop indicators that could be used to measure accessibility. The consultations helped point towards areas where more knowledge was needed. They also helped to identify potential new sources of information on accessibility.

ESDC also carried out [public opinion research](#) on accessibility in 2019. The purpose of this research was to better understand awareness of the Act and the attitudes of Canadians, both with and without disabilities, towards accessibility, inclusion and barriers faced by persons with disabilities. The resulting data has created a baseline for further research in this area.

In 2021, ESDC and Statistics Canada worked together to launch the [Accessibility Data Hub](#). The Hub is a centralized web portal that presents data on topics related to accessibility and disability organized around the 7 priority areas set out in the Act. It is an evergreen information repository that is available for use by all Canadians.

## 5. Guiding principles

The collection, measurement and use of information through this Strategy will be guided by 6 principles:

- “Nothing Without Us”
- Collaboration
- Intersectionality
- Data stewardship
- Accessible by design
- Innovation

These principles were inspired by the spirit of the Act and because they are relevant to the purpose of the Strategy.

### 5.1 “Nothing Without Us”

“Nothing Without Us” is a central principle of the Act because Canada is a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The Government of Canada applies this principle to all its efforts to advance inclusion.



With respect to this Strategy, inclusion of Nothing Without Us as a guiding principle recognizes the lived experience and expertise of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities have a vested interest in ensuring that measurement results continue to inform actions needed to continue advancing accessibility.

Persons with disabilities will be consulted in the implementation of this Strategy as required.

## 5.2 Collaboration

Many different organizations will be involved in collecting the data and information about accessibility required to measure progress in implementing the Act. These organizations will have to collaborate to ensure they collect and manage data and information in the same way and to avoid duplication.

Collaboration will also provide organizations the opportunity to learn from one another. This could support the development of improved methods for measuring accessibility in the future.

## 5.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is about how different aspects of a person's identity can impact the way in which they experience barriers to inclusion. Intersectionality factors include:

- age
- race
- sex
- sexual orientation
- income
- education
- disability; and others

Disability type and severity can also impact a person's experience of barriers. For this reason, it will be important to take an intersectional approach to data collection and analysis. This will provide a richer, more complete picture of accessibility in Canada.

## 5.4 Open data and data stewardship

All collection, measurement and use of information under this Strategy will be done according to the [FAIR Principles for data management and stewardship](#). FAIR



stands for Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Adherence to the FAIR principles will also support the Government of Canada's commitment to making government information more accessible through the [Open Data portal](#).

## 5.5 Accessible by design

Activities carried out under this Strategy will incorporate accessible design where relevant in order to maximize reach across the disability community. For example, surveys will be produced in accessible formats. The surveys will be tested by persons with different kinds of disabilities. Consultations with the disability community will be accessible. Reports will also be available in accessible formats.

## 5.6 Innovation

Implementing the Strategy will include continuously looking for new and better ways to collect and analyse information. For example, ACD is currently collaborating with the CDO in ESDC to explore the use of a machine learning tool to extract information from the accessibility plans and reports required to be published by organizations and businesses regulated under the Act.

## 6. Areas of work

Achieving an accessible Canada requires action to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. To be effective, these actions must be based on accurate and up-to-date information. This means that collecting and measuring information about accessibility must be a continuous cycle of collecting data to fill gaps in knowledge, using the data to measure, sharing measurement results and identifying subsequent gaps in knowledge.

To support this cycle of effort, work under the Strategy can be divided into 4 categories:

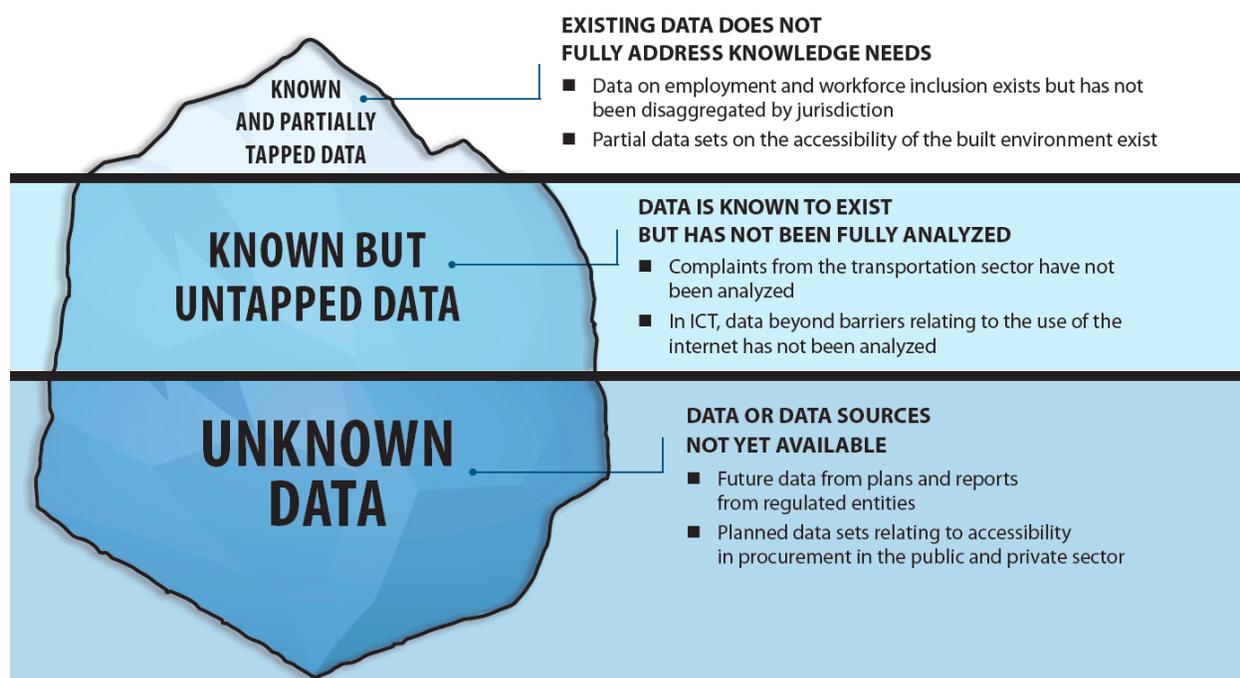
- Identify knowledge and data gaps, and develop indicators
- Promote common approaches to measurement
- Expand and integrate data sources
- Data and knowledge mobilization

### 6.1 Identify knowledge and data gaps, and develop indicators

ACD has worked with federal partners and the disability community to establish specific indicators that correspond with each priority area set out in the Act. It has also identified what data exists to help measure against those indicators, and where

more data is needed. While there has been some progress in collecting information on accessibility, there are still large gaps. As Figure 1 shows, what is currently known about barriers to accessibility is just the tip of the iceberg.

Figure 1: Knowledge and data gaps in accessibility



For example, there is some [information about barriers to internet use for persons with disabilities](#). However, little data exists regarding the accessibility of websites or information technology systems used in by federally regulated organizations and businesses.

ACD will continue to work with Statistics Canada and other federal partners to identify and fill these and other gaps in knowledge. Performance indicators will also continue to evolve over time in response to feedback received from the disability community.

Performance indicators and accessibility measures will also take into account the effects of major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with disabilities.

## 6.2 Promote common approaches to measurement

Common approaches to measurement can help ensure quality and comparability across data sets resulting from different measurement activities. Common



approaches can also help ensure that data represents the full diversity of the Canadian population.

The following approaches to measurement will be promoted in carrying out work under this Strategy:

- increased use of the Statistics Canada disability screening questionnaire (DSQ) in federal surveys in order to capture important information on accessibility.

The DSQ allows for data on disability to be separated into different categories, such as type and severity of disability. Separating data out in this way will help to understand the different ways diverse persons with disabilities experience barriers to accessibility

- collection of information on the full range of barriers experienced by persons with diverse disabilities.

The Government of Canada will increase its use of qualitative research as a companion to accessibility data collection surveys. This could include focus groups and interviews where persons with a diverse range of disabilities could describe the nature, scope and frequency of the barriers they experience in more detail. Information collected could be used to inform the development of new survey modules used to measure progress in removing barriers

- enhance data representativeness and inclusion.

Increased attention to the accessibility of information-gathering processes will help to ensure that findings represent the needs and experiences of a diverse range of persons with disabilities. For example, the availability of Braille, sign language and other alternate formats will encourage greater participation rates by persons with disabilities

### **6.3 Expand and integrate data sources**

ESDC will explore and promote the use of existing tools to gather more data on accessibility.

The Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) is an example of an existing tool that collects information on adults with disabilities. A new series of questions on accessibility barriers has been added to the version of the CSD that is going into the field in Spring 2022. These questions focus on barriers related to many priority areas in the Act, and also include questions about attitudinal barriers to inclusion.



Other existing surveys could be used to gather information on accessibility, including:

- general population surveys like the General Social Survey
- targeted surveys conducted by federal departments, including Service Canada Client Experience Surveys
- surveys run by disability community organizations, and
- surveys run by provincial or territorial governments

Accessibility plans and progress reports published by organizations may also provide new sources of data and information on accessibility. ESDC has already started a project to study how machine learning can be used to obtain useful data from the plans and reports that will be published online.

Another way the Strategy will help create a more complete picture of accessibility is to explore options to combine data from different sources. For example, integration of data sets from the Labour Force Survey and the Canadian Income Survey were recently used to better understand the link between the COVID-19 pandemic and the prevalence of mental health disability among persons who were already employed.<sup>1</sup>

## 6.4 Data and knowledge mobilization

Collecting information on accessibility is only the beginning. Sharing data informs research and is essential to encouraging the proactive removal of existing barriers. It also fosters progress in advancing accessibility at the provincial and community level.

Finally, information collected through the Strategy will help to show Canadians that progress is being made in implementing the Act, which is consistent with the Government of Canada approach to open government.

The launch of the [Accessibility Data Hub](#) in June 2021 was an important step in mobilizing data. The Hub is a website that contains a growing amount of information on accessibility and disability related to the 7 priority areas in the Act. Information is provided in various formats and also features an interactive data visualization tool.

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<sup>1</sup> [Mental health-related disability rises among employed Canadians during pandemic, 2021. The Daily, Statistics Canada](#)



The Hub is intended to be an evergreen repository of data. The Government of Canada will work to ensure information on the Hub continues to be up-to-date for the benefit of all Canadians, including the disability community.

In collaboration with federal partners and the disability community, ESDC will explore other ways to mobilize data in order to reflect changes in data collection and measurement.

## **7. Governance and implementation**

The strategy includes a governance framework comprising of an interdepartmental Director General Steering Committee (DGSC), supported by an interdepartmental working group that includes representatives from all federal departments and agencies with responsibilities under the Act. ACD will provide secretariat support to the DGSC.

The DGSC helps to ensure collaboration and coordination across federal departments related to this strategy and will guide its implementation and future renewal. The interdepartmental working group provides a forum to discuss accessibility measurement activities.

Implementation of the Strategy is facilitated by a memorandum of understanding between ESDC and Statistics Canada, as well as annual letters of agreement.

The Strategy will be implemented according to the plan shown in Table 1 that highlights key accessibility data and measurement activities over the next 2 years. Operationalization will also include consultation with the disability community, researchers and others as needed.

Table 1: Implementation timeline for 2022 to 2024

Status	Identify knowledge and data gaps	Promote common approaches to measurement	Expand and integrate data sources	Data knowledge mobilization
Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scan for existing information and gaps (fall 2019)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze issues and common approaches related to accessibility data (2019 to 2020)</li> </ul>	Collect recent data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>first cycle of public opinion research (2019)</li> <li>survey on Accessibility in Federal Sector Organizations (2021)</li> <li>additional analysis of 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch Accessibility Data Hub (July 2021)</li> </ul>
Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New scan for existing information and gaps (2022 to 2023)</li> <li>Consult disability community, regulators and Chief Accessibility Officer (CAO) on data needs, sources and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse qualitative information; look for ways to collect information on fuller range of barriers encountered by persons with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Canada Income Survey to gather new data on accessibility (2022 to 2023)</li> <li>Launch of 2022 CSD field work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish and share data with partners and stakeholders</li> </ul>

	performance indicators (2022 to 2023)			
Planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish performance indicator framework (2022 to 2023)</li> <li>• Ongoing collection, analysis and reporting of information from new and existing data sources (2022 to 2024)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Statistics Canada and others to increase use of the Disability Screening Questionnaire (DSQ) in federal surveys (2022 to 2024)</li> <li>• Develop, test and run federal accessibility modules in priority areas (2022 to 24)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for new data sets outside federal sector (2023 to 2024)</li> <li>• Explore use of machine learning for collecting administrative data (2023 to 2024)</li> <li>• Study ways to increase integration of federal data to support intersectional analysis (2023 to 2024)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue publishing and sharing accessibility data for use by partners and stakeholders.</li> </ul>