# Accessibility In Service Delivery

- Importance of accessibility in Canada
- Disaggregated data collection in support of accessibility
- Implications of data collection for governmental accessibility efforts
- Privacy considerations
- Accessible Canada Act: implications for service delivery
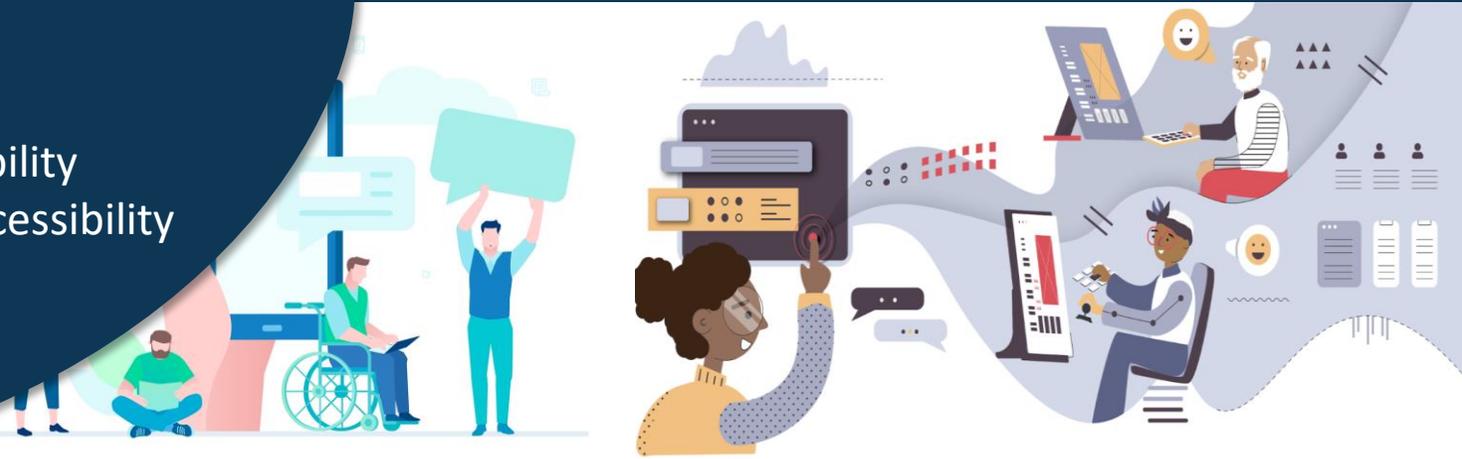
JOINT COUNCILS' EXECUTIVE MONTHLY REPORT
Developed by the Research Committee
July/August 2022

Images: Visa, Deque, PrometSource, BeAccessible,Medium

1. Importance of accessibility in Canada

Canadians have the right to take part fully in society. Advancing accessibility is about creating barrier-free communities, workplaces, and services for all Canadians. This is especially important to the more than 6 million Canadians, aged 15 and over, who have a disability.

In 2010, Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). By signing the UNCRPD, the Government of Canada committed to furthering the rights of persons with disabilities. Accessibility is an integral part of a wider equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) framework supported by the federal government as part of its 2021-2024 Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

The development of 2019 national accessibility legislation – the Accessible Canada Act (ACA) – illustrates Canada's commitment to accessibility and the rights of persons with disabilities. The development of this legislation involved significant consultation with stakeholders, particularly with the disability community. The resulting Accessible Canada Act is a landmark federal legislation that aims to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

A key principle of the ACA is "Nothing Without Us", meaning that persons with disabilities should be consulted when developing laws, policies and programs that impact them. In keeping with this principle, the Government of Canada works with persons with disabilities, and organizations who advocate on their behalf, to better understand the full diversity of the community it serves.

Four provinces, Nova Scotia (An Act Respecting Accessibility Legislation in Nova Scotia, 2017), Manitoba (The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, 2013), Ontario (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005), and Quebec (An Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration, 2004) currently have accessibility legislation in place.

Why Is This Report Important?

Accessibility is a national priority legislated by the Accessible Canada Act. It is one of the key strategic goals for different provinces and for many other Canadian organizations and stakeholders.

The definition of disability used by Statistics Canada's Canadian Survey on Disability includes anyone who reported being "sometimes", "often" or "always" limited in their daily activities due to a long-term condition or health problem, as well as anyone who reported being "rarely" limited if they were also unable to do certain tasks or could only do them with a lot of difficulty.

The number of Canadians identifying with a disability is increasing due to a more inclusive representation of different disabilities including non-visible categories, and the progress in our society toward greater understanding and reduced stigma to self-disclose. At all age levels, persons with disabilities benefit from advances in accessibility of built environments, products, and services, including our aging population.

Federal accessibility legislation cannot address barriers to accessibility within areas of provincial jurisdiction. Accessibility legislation in various provinces would complement federal efforts to promote inclusion and accessibility.

What is Covered in this Executive Report?

This report includes the following:

- Importance of accessibility in Canada
- Disaggregated data collection in support of accessibility
- Implications of data collection for governmental accessibility efforts
- Privacy considerations
- Accessible Canada Act: implications for service delivery

2. Disaggregated data collection in support of accessibility

A Federal Data and Measurement Strategy for Accessibility 2022 to 2027 explains what the Government of Canada will do to improve what is known about accessibility in Canada. The Strategy involves disaggregated data collection to leverage new data sources as they become available, and to identify the best ways to measure progress on accessibility.

To be effective, progress measurement 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.

The assessment of that data allows for early consideration of accessibility changes in policy, program and service design, which will also promote greater inclusion over time.

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

1) increased use of the Statistics Canada disability screening questionnaire (DSQ) in federal surveys in order to capture important information on accessibility;
2) collection of information on the full range of barriers experienced by persons with diverse disabilities;
3) enhance data representativeness and inclusion.

From the full inclusion and intersectionality perspectives, it is important to ensure the completeness of the data collection and assessment processes. Below are some of the current knowledge and data gaps in accessibility:

KNOWN AND PARTIALLY TAPPED DATA

EXISTING DATA DOES NOT FULLY ADDRESS KNOWLEDGE NEEDS
- Data on employment and workforce inclusion exists but has not been disaggregated by jurisdiction
- Partial data sets on the accessibility of the built environment exist

KNOWN BUT UNTAPPED DATA

DATA IS KNOWN TO EXIST BUT HAS NOT BEEN FULLY ANALYZED
- Complaints from the transportation sector have not been analyzed
- In ICT, data beyond barriers relating to the use of the internet has not been analyzed

UNKNOWN DATA

DATA OR DATA SOURCES NOT YET AVAILABLE
- Future data from plans and reports from regulated entities
- Planned data sets relating to accessibility in procurement in the public and private sector

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.

3. Implications of data collection for governmental accessibility efforts

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

Information collected through the Federal Data and Measurement Strategy for Accessibility 2022 to 2027 will help to show Canadians that progress is being made in implementing the ACA, 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 ACA. Information is provided in various formats and also features an interactive data visualization tool.

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.

The chart to the right illustrates several factors that speak to the importance of the enhanced and inclusive disaggregated data collection practices.

Sources: Creating new federal accessibility legislation: What we learned - Canada.ca; Reports on Disability and Accessibility in Canada (statcan.gc.ca)

4. Privacy considerations

Three major factors are now pushing change in the wider personal data industry, the implications of which could potentially influence the design and delivery of accessibility and citizen services. All three of these factors are rapidly spreading and intertwining, creating waves throughout the private and public sectors alike.

1. **Mistrust among consumers.** The term "surveillance capitalism," coined by its author Shoshana Zuboff as "an economic system built on the secret extraction and manipulation of human data," has gained popularity, capturing consumers' growing awareness that their data is being bought, sold, and used without their consent — and their growing reluctance to put up with it. People are voting with their thumbs: both Facebook and Twitter are seeing losses in daily active users in their primary North American markets.

2. **Government action.** Federal lawmakers are moving to curtail the power of big tech. In the U.S. alone, state legislatures proposed or passed at least 27 online privacy bills, regulating data markets and protecting personal digital rights. Lawmakers from Canada to China are implementing legislation that mirrors Europe's GDPR, while the EU itself has turned its attention to regulating the use of AI. Where once companies were always ahead of regulators, now they struggle to keep up with compliance requirements across multiple jurisdictions.

3. **Competition in the marketplace.** Apple's iPhone operating system was upgraded last year, allowing customers to disable data harvesters' ability to monitor them across their various apps. It was a welcome shift, giving customers control and authority over their data. It also hit firms that rely on cross-app monitoring hard: in the second half of 2021, it cost the main social media sites $10 billion in lost revenue.

Sources: The New Rules of Data Privacy (hbr.org); FTC Imposes $5 Billion Penalty and Sweeping New Privacy Restrictions on Facebook

Below are key federal and provincial legislative pieces that govern privacy and data collection practices in Canada.

The Accessible Canada Regulations, SOR/2021-241 (the "Regulations") came into force on December 13, 2021. These Regulations set out many of the initial obligations applicable to federally regulated employers under the Accessible Canada Act, including the obligations to prepare accessibility plans, feedback processes and progress reports. The Regulations also establish monetary penalties to help promote compliance with the Act.

In addition, Accessibility Standards Canada recently published the Roadmap to 2040 (the "Roadmap"). The Roadmap sets out flexible goals to guide Accessibility Standards Canada in reaching the goal of creating a Canada without barriers by 2040, including:

- the development of standards in employment, plain language, emergency exit, and outdoor spaces by the end of 2024;
- the development of additional standards in the medium term (by the end of 2026) and the long-term (by the end of 2028);
- the development of initial standards in all priority areas (which include employment, the built environment, information and communication technologies, communication, the procurement of goods, services and facilities, the design and delivery of programs and services, and transportation) by January 1, 2033;
- conducting ongoing research to assess priorities; and
- working closely with regulators, federally regulated entities, other government and standards development bodies, and other levels of government.

Sources: Roadmap to 2040; Infographic on the Accessible Canada Act
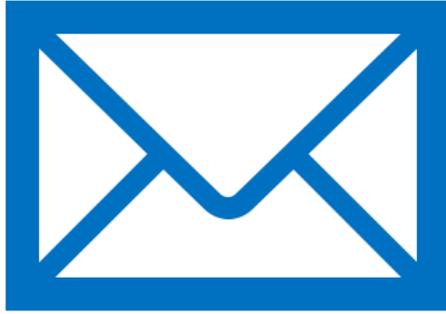
For Further Reading

- Perks, A., J. Gillis, T. Hanson, K. Haralampides, G. Hewus, A. Jrade, A. Khan et al. "Accessibility for All: A Report from the CSCE President's Task Force on Accessibility." In Canadian Society of Civil Engineering Annual Conference, pp. 49-57. Springer, Singapore, 2023.

- ChipBélanger, Annie. "Accessibility and Public Services-Part 1: The Case for Access." International Information & Library Review (2022): 1-7.

- Jaeger, Paul T. "Designing for Diversity and Designing for Disability." The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion 2, no. 1/2 (2018): 52-66.

- Booth, Char. "Introduction: Why Accessibility?." Library Technology Reports 48, no. 7 (2012): 5-6.

- Pionke, J. J. "Disability in the Time of COVID." Journal of Library Administration 62, no. 2 (2022): 259-265.

Other noteworthy articles:

- Polacek, Kelly Myer, Charlie Remy, and Priscilla Seaman. "Evolving from disability to diversity." Reference & User Services Quarterly 54, no. 1 (2014): 24-28.

- Hub, Experiential Learning. "Key Concepts in Ableism and Accessibility." Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Practice (2022).

Research Repository
Access the Citizen First Research Repository.

Recent entries on the research repository:

Distributed Government – Joint Councils' Executive Report June 2022

This report includes the following: Importance of User-Centered Design in Government, Systematic User-Centered Design Process, How to Enable User-Centered Design Thinking, Strategic Enablers to Improve User-Centered Design.

Trends in the Daily Newsletter

[Government officials in Canada and the United States gave their prognosis for how the Covid pandemic altered the direction of digital ID.](#) Canada's Treasury Board president says the pandemic was an accelerant for broader acceptance of digital ID, while a U.S. congressman says digital ID can serve as an effective modern tool to combat pandemic-related fraud. Canada does not have an official digital ID. Though popular according to one poll, it has remained an initiative left to the provinces and territories and has elicited a wide range of opinions.
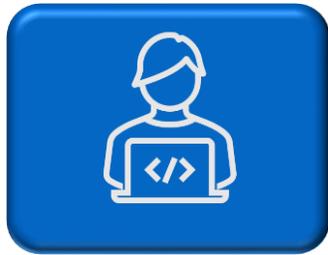
Ottawa has unveiled long-awaited rules for the use of Canadians' personal data by the private sector, which includes the power to request information be destroyed, hefty fines for non-compliance and new provisions governing the use of artificial intelligence. [The new legislation](#) would give people the freedom to move their information from one organization to another securely and ensures they can request that their information be disposed of when it is no longer needed. It also establishes stronger protections for minors.
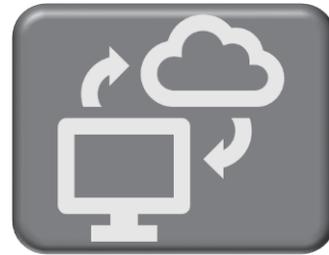
In designing accessible digital products and services, steps can be taken to enhance the user experience of those with varying cognitive abilities — [a topic of discussion at the Digital.gov 2022 Government UX Summit.](#) As stakeholders push for greater digital accessibility and more inclusive digital services, government agencies are taking new approaches, opting for simplicity and increasingly coming to rethink previous design practices. Accessibility efforts are sometimes centered around users with physical disabilities, such as vision or hearing impairments, but cognitive disabilities and differences can also impact the user experience.
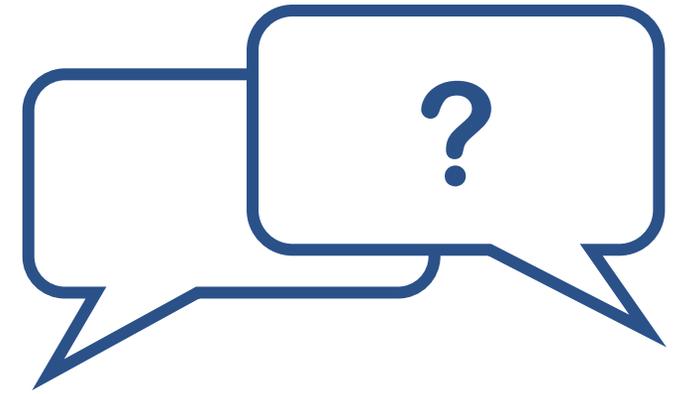
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