Using data and decent work to advance equity within the nonprofit sector
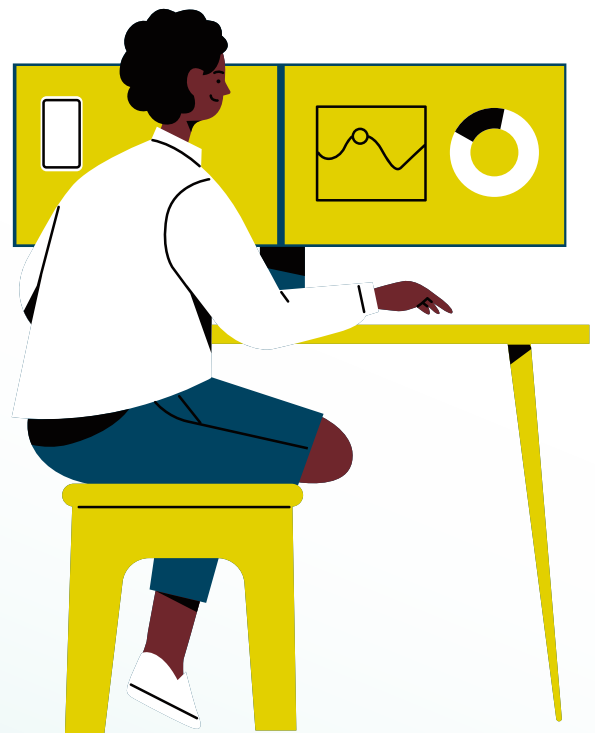
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Legal Disclaimer

Please note that the following is a general discussion of good practices in using data to create a decent work environment. Handling data in the workplace can have legal implications that form a part of what good practices look like. We will touch on these and flag some of the key considerations for nonprofits, this is not legal advice.

How to use this resource

This resource is intended for use by nonprofit organizations, researchers, and funders. It may be of particular interest to people working in Human Resources, policy, and evaluation, and those interested in equitable data collection and decent work practices.

Nonprofits use data everyday

Data can take several forms and influence both internal and external nonprofit operations. Staff check-ins, feedback surveys, client information forms, sick day tracking, and equity audits are all examples of how nonprofits collect and utilize data in program or service development, internal policies and practices, and broader advocacy. This data can also help nonprofits share their stories and better understand how their work is impacted by equity, racial justice, and colonialism. As nonprofits review their human resources data, they may find patterns demarcating the differing experiences of staff based on their social location and intersectional identities - some of which may not be easy to detect without thoughtful data collection and analysis.

Data is not inherently neutral.

It can be used to violently suppress equity-seeking groups, to monitor and police Black communities and workers, and to justify the refusal to change harmful, destructive systems. For example, an organization might claim that because there is not enough organizational data on their employee's experiences of racism, there is no reason to create anti-racist programming for staff. Having data also does not mean that change is guaranteed. One of the most common phrases that we hear in engagement sessions on decent work within the sector is that Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities with intersecting identities are often over-researched yet under-served and under-funded.

Racialized and colonial story of work and labour

How we collect, analyze, and utilize data on employment in our sector - from who is employed by nonprofits to the development of effective retention strategies - impacts how we think about our sector's working conditions.

Recent data analysis on working conditions provides evidence that racialized pay inequities exist within the nonprofit sector; racialized workers comprise one-third of the overall workforce yet receive lower average annual salaries compared to their non-racialized counterparts.[1]

These statistics may surprise some people, as the nonprofit sector is often considered to be doing frontline work tackling poverty, racial inequality, and social justice. However, the story of labour and work on Turtle Island (North America) has long been shaped by white supremacy and patriarchy. It shows up in insidious and often normalized ways, ranging from lower pay and little benefits for "feminized" care jobs, like childcare workers, to unfair wage restraint legislation like Ontario's Bill 124. Countries like Canada have been developed at the expense of Black, Indigenous, and racialized bodies.

Historically and across various industries and occupations, Black, Indigenous, and racialized people are more likely to be underpaid, face discrimination, and be subject to terrible working conditions, in comparison to their white counterparts.[2] Our society's ideas on work are rooted in white supremacist framing of labour. Examples include how our society values certain types of labour (executive or management) over others (administrative or janitorial), or prioritizing hours worked (i.e. enforcing 40 hour weeks) over outcomes (i.e. completing tasks).

Definitions

Equity

Refers to achieving parity in policy, process, and outcomes for historically and/or currently underrepresented and/or marginalized people and groups while accounting for diversity. It considers power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes, in three main areas:

- Representational equity - the proportional participation at all levels of an institution;
- Resource equity - the distribution of resources in order to close equity gaps; and
- Equity-mindedness - the demonstration of an awareness of, and willingness to, address equity issues.

Intersectionality

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity as they apply to a given individual or group. Intersectional identities create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Definitions

Decent Work

Decent work is a prism to look at some of the internal questions that organizations have in terms of creating equitable working conditions for nonprofit workers. There are several indicators of decent work as identified by the International Labour Organization. These indicators include:

- Decent wages and hours
- Safety in the workplace
- Advancement in the workplace
- Access to benefits and pension

ONN's commitment to the <u>decent work</u> movement has been grounded in working alongside the sector to identify the personal, interpersonal, and systemic sites of change that advance decent work, ensuring that intersectional analysis is foundational.

Applying data equity frameworks gives us better quality data

Data equity frameworks allow us to be more confident in how we are using and collecting data to inform our decent work practices. At its core, "data equity" is a broad and complex term. It recognizes that power dynamics play a significant role in peoples' relationships with data. People with more privilege often decide what questions get asked, how they are answered and how those answers are used. They also often have less reservations about sharing information. Racialized communities often have limited access to data and are disproportionately harmed by data misuse and misinterpretation. "Data equity" can also be used in relation to data sovereignty - especially for Indigenous communities that are advocating for greater ownership, representation, and control over data pertaining to their communities, practices, and history.

The life cycle of data - how it has been collected and analyzed to how it has been shared and stored - decides what narratives are derived from it. It is one way to question the information we are using and to consider how data can potentially harm racialized peoples or communities.

Data equity frameworks can be a tool to support decent work practices

Data equity frameworks invite us to think about the ways data can be harmful and contribute to systems of oppression and how data can be used to address systemic inequities. When we apply an equity framework to all iterations of labour data, it can be used to highlight how systems of oppression affect work conditions for Black, Indigenous, and racialized folks. Our increased capacity to collect timely and accurate data, being mindful in our sensemaking, and sharing more nuanced, intersectional understandings of data-driven narratives can help us understand what is actually happening in our workplaces and identify opportunities to advance decent work.

Data collection that is rooted in data equity frameworks can help highlight gaps in our knowledge, guide advocacy efforts, and build internal practices that encourage worker health and progress. For example, better understanding of structural gaps, like the continued underfunding of Black-led and Black-serving organizations in Canada, help us understand how underfunding contributes to continued wage disparity of racialized workers.[3] Individualized organizational practices, such as pay equity reviews, can help organizations determine if there is a wage gap and work towards its elimination.

Suggestions for data equity frameworks and tools

There are lots of different data equity frameworks and tools available. Adopting a particular framework may depend on the organization's work, mandate, internal operations, and programs or services. Some of these frameworks are listed below.

Frameworks

Indigenous Data Equity:

- First Nations Indigenous Governance Centre (FNIGC): First Nations Principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP)
- Global Indigenous Data Alliance (GIDA): CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Sovereignty
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC): Utility Self-voicing, Access and Inter-relationality (USAI) Research Framework

Additional data equity resources:

- Black Health Equity Working Group: Engagement, Governance, Access and Protection (EGAP)
- Design Justice Network: Read the Principles
- Hawa'ii Data Collaborative: Data Equity: What Is It, and Why Does It Matter?

Tools

- We All Count: The Data Equity Framework
- Youth Rex: An Inclusive Gender Menu
- Urban Institute: Using Data to Advance Racial Equity in Local Communities

Decent work and data equity examples

We've provided two scenarios to demonstrate how decent work and data equity are related and we encourage you to consider these scenarios in relation to your work.

Scenario 1:

A small nonprofit organization, Homework Helpers, with four full-time staff working in an open, shared working space are asked by their senior leadership to complete a staff satisfaction survey. The senior leadership will use the survey results to plan their organizational budget and amend existing human resources practices and policies.

The survey asks questions on what people need to work better, including accessibility accommodations. A staff member, Jordan, indicates they require certain accommodations due to ongoing health issues. The program manager, who is reviewing the survey results, openly apologizes to Jordan for the access barriers they have experienced, and promises to make changes to their work space.

Digging Deeper:

Jordan already felt uncomfortable with filling out the initial survey, which used outdated language to collect demographic information. They hesitated in responding to the survey, because there was no clear indication of where this information would be kept, for how long, or how it would be used. They were further humiliated by the program manager's pronouncement and apology, even if it was well-intentioned.

Questions for Discussions

- What impact could this have on Jordan and the workplace even if no rights are violated?
- What could the organization do differently?

Data equity and decent work considerations:

A statement violating the privacy of an individual may qualify as harassment under the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act. Particularly if this type of conduct reflects a pattern in which their privacy is compromised or they're made to feel uncomfortable.

Resource:

Privacy in the Workplace: https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/employers-and-employees/02_05_d_17/

Note: Many nonprofits are not directly subject to federal privacy law as is linked above. Nevertheless, in many cases the standards embodied in federal privacy law both reflect good practices, as well as the standards a nonprofit might be held to by a court or future legislation that does include the nonprofit sector.

There are a number of things that Homework Helpers can do differently in the future.

1. As an organizational practice, at the minimum, share the following information prior to data collection.

- Why is this data being collected?
- How will it be housed?
- Who will have access to it?
- How will it be used?
- How long will it be retained?

Providing answers to these questions prior to requesting data can help build trust with respondents, and may help the organization clarify its post-collection practices.

2. Two of the <u>ILO's indicators on decent work</u> include safe(r) work environments and equal opportunity and treatment in the workplace. Decent working conditions must take into consideration practices of consent, not only on data collection, but when engaging in conversations of access.

 Confidentiality and informed consent are key. This can include:
- Ensuring that conversations always occur in a space where no other employees are present. Information around access needs within a workspace should never be discussed in public spaces.
- Making sure that all forms are <u>AODA compliant</u>. This should be a standard practice, as employers have a duty to accommodate.
- Engaging in intersectional <u>practices of accessibility</u> in the workplace.

3. As an organization invests in equity, their language (and culture) will evolve to be more inclusive and welcoming. Actions such as staff training or scheduled materials review can help organizations operationalize their learnings. <u>Inclusive language is important</u> to data collection because it can help ensure data accuracy.

Scenario 2:

An employee reports incidents of homophobia and racism they experienced in the workplace to their manager. This leads to a workplace investigation where the manager still needs more information, and hopes to do so without further emotional impact to the employee who reported the incidents.

The manager is legally obligated to seek out information and must follow up on these complaints and any further issues that may be uncovered during their investigation. The manager may need to collect data such as how often the harassment occurred or whether it has been experienced by others. This information will need to be shared with the Executive Director so the organization can plan a course of action.

Digging Deeper:

Data, especially on sensitive topics such as workplace violence, is particularly challenging to collect. Understanding how to collect data without incurring further harm or trauma is also a significant challenge. It's critical that nonprofits consider trauma-informed approaches to data collection that consider all parties to support the collection of information.

Questions for discussion:

- Is information about reporting experiences of racism and homophobia accessible and common knowledge within the organization?
- What protections need to be in place before sensitive data is collected?
- What practices may help reduce or eliminate workplace harassment?

Data equity and decent work considerations:

Employees are less likely to report incidents of racism and homophobia in their workplace, such as microaggressions. For example, Black Canadians report that discrimination in the workplace is more likely to occur than in the criminal justice system, education, or child service sectors. In addition, in Canada 2SLGBTQ+ workers are twice as likely as straight employees to have experienced inappropriate behaviors at work.

Nonprofits should always consider decent work indicators and equity within the workplace as critical to addressing reported incidents, as well as preventive measures.

The organization should consider committing to regular reviews of employee data to identify trends and potential issues. For issues such as homophobia and racism, other sources of data may need to be collected and reviewed. These may include staff surveys, exit interviews, turnover statistics, absenteeism data, and minutes or notes from other employee discussions. Sometimes patterns can emerge when employee data is reviewed through other factors, like location of work, department, or tenure. This data collection may not be as traumatizing to individuals who have experienced harassment as it does not rely on personal recollection.

Additionally, employees may be more likely to disclose incidents of harassment if there are strong policies in place on how sensitive information is kept, who has access to it, and a commitment to privacy and how investigations can model decent work practices.

References

1. Jensen, Emily. Diversity is Our Strength (Toronto, ON: Imagine Canada, 2022).
2. Block, Sheila and Grace-Edward Galabuzi. (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2011).
3. Pereira et al. Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked By Canadian Philanthropy (Ontario: Network for the Advancement of Black Communities, 2020).