

SELF-IDENTIFICATION

for Employment Equity by Indigenous Peoples,
Persons with Disabilities and
Members of Visible Minorities



The Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) and the Federal Contractors Program (FCP) are two federal programs that seek to achieve equality in private-sector workplaces and correct disadvantages in employment experienced by members of 4 designated groups: women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities.

As part of their implementation of employment equity under the LEEP and the FCP, employers must collect workforce data. To determine the representation of Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities, employers must rely on voluntary self-identification.

Due to the voluntary nature of self-identification, employers have indicated that the data collected through the workforce questionnaire may underestimate the actual representation of members of these groups.

In an effort to understand and address this challenge, the Labour Program entered into a contract with R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to study self-identification by members of these 3 designated groups in workplaces (see [research activities](#) for further details). There were 3 project objectives:

- measuring the extent to which Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities self-identify to their employers for employment equity purposes
- identifying factors that contribute to self-identification
- determining practical ways employers can improve self-identification

Thanks to the participation of many employers, the research project gathered valuable evidence on self-identification for employment equity purposes. The key findings are presented below and are based on Malatest's final report. You can request a copy of the report by [contacting us](#).

KEY FINDINGS

The main research findings are organized along the 3 project objectives:

- extent of self-identification
- factors contributing to self-identification
- practical ways to improve self-identification

Extent

In all 3 designated groups that were studied, some employees choose not to self-identify to their employers for employment equity purposes.

According to a survey of LEEP and FCP employees, 23% of members of the designated groups studied have not self-identified to their employers or would not do so if asked. Self-identification varies across designated groups, as well as industrial sectors.

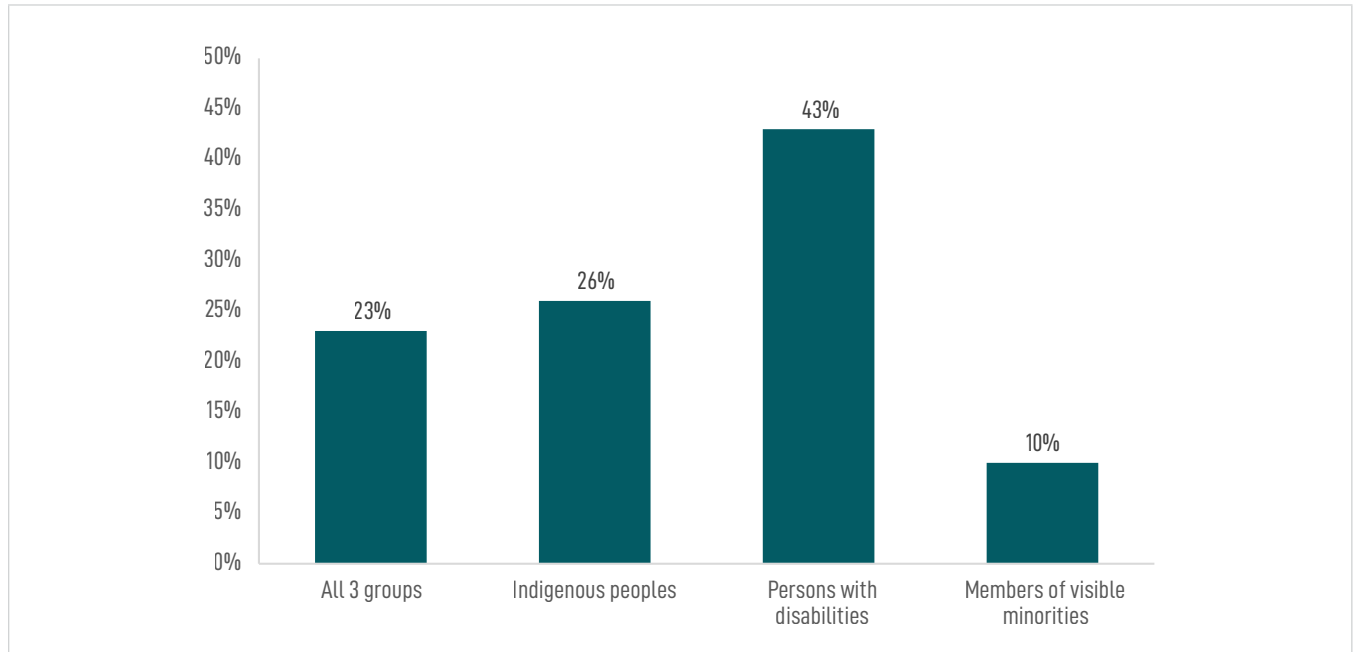


Graph 1 presents data by designated group.

- 26% of Indigenous peoples have not self-identified or indicated they would not self-identify to their employers
- 43% of persons with disabilities have not or would not self-identify to their employers
- 10% of members of visible minorities have not or would not self-identify to their employers

GRAPH 1

Members of designated groups who have not self-identified or would not self-identify to their employers, by designated group (percentage)

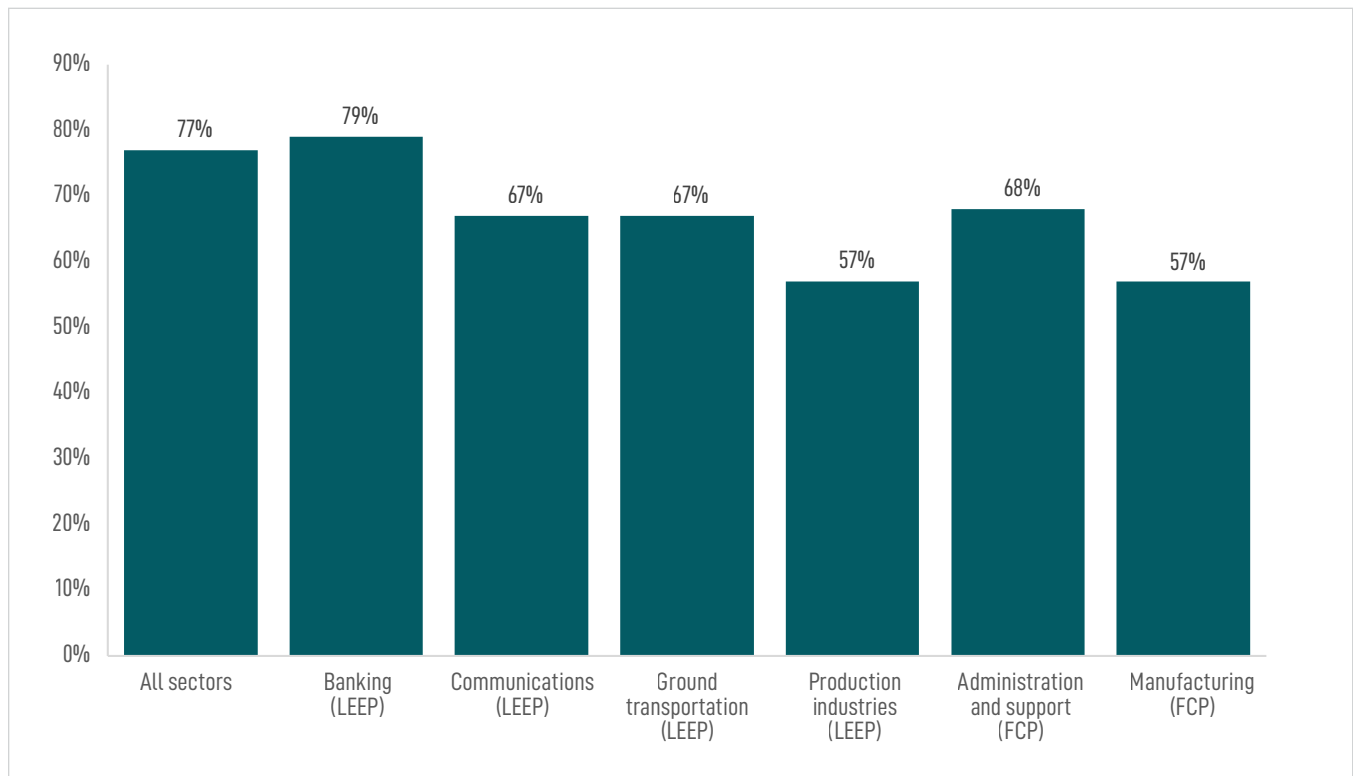


Graph 2 presents data by sector.

- Across all sectors, 77% of members of the 3 designated groups have self-identified or indicated they would self-identify to their employers
- In Banking (LEEP), 79% of members of the 3 designated groups have or would self-identify to their employers
- In Communications (LEEP), 67% of members of the 3 designated groups have or would self-identify to their employers
- In Ground transportation (LEEP), 67% of members of the 3 designated groups have or would self-identify to their employers
- In Production industries (LEEP), 57% of members of the 3 designated groups have or would self-identify to their employers
- In Administrative and support (FCP), 68% of members of the 3 designated groups have or would self-identify to their employers
- In Manufacturing (FCP), 57% of members of the 3 designated groups have or would self-identify to their employers

GRAPH 2

Members of designated groups who have self-identified or would self-identify to their employers, by sector (percentage)



Factors

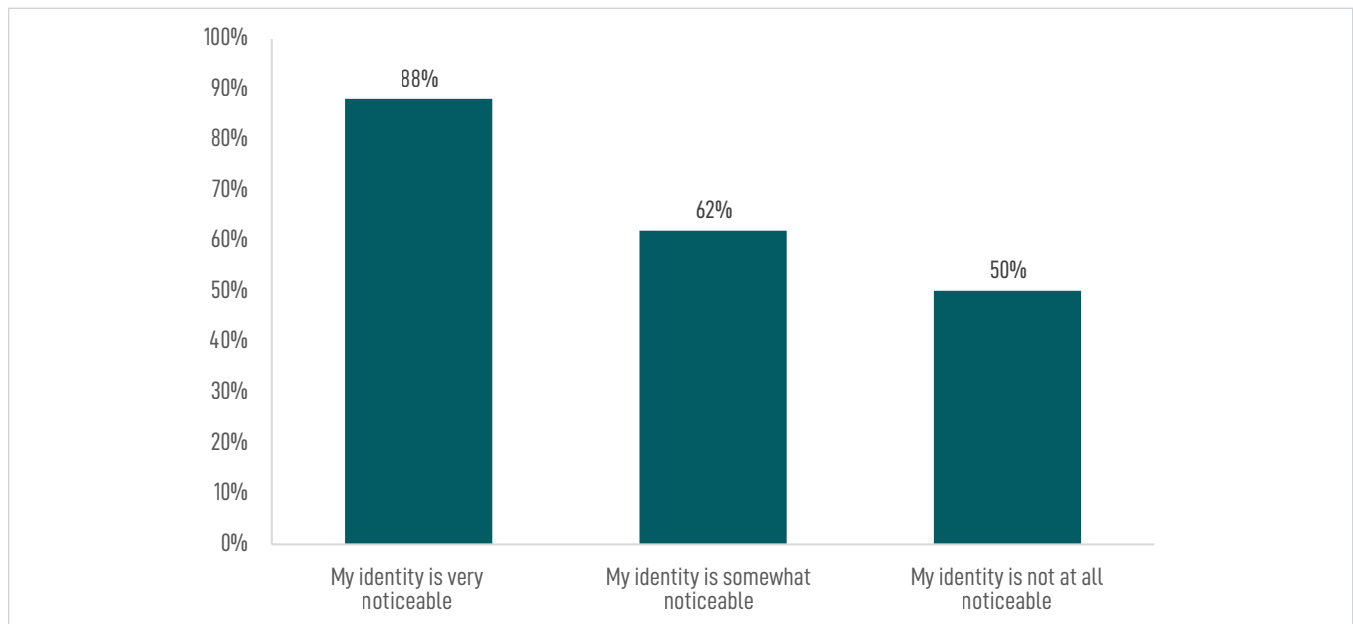
Personal factors likely contribute to self-identification, but organizational factors also play a role.

Graph 3 presents the major personal factor identified through this research: members of designated groups studied who perceive their identity to be noticeable are more likely to self-identify to their employers.

- 88% of members of the 3 designated groups who perceived their identities as being very noticeable have self-identified or would self-identify to their employers
- 62% of members of the 3 designated groups who perceived their identities as being somewhat noticeable have self-identified or would self-identify to their employers
- 50% of members of the 3 designated groups who perceived their identities as being not at all noticeable have self-identified or would self-identify to their employers

GRAPH 3

Members of designated groups who have self-identified or would self-identify to their employers, by how noticeable they perceive their identity to be (percentage)

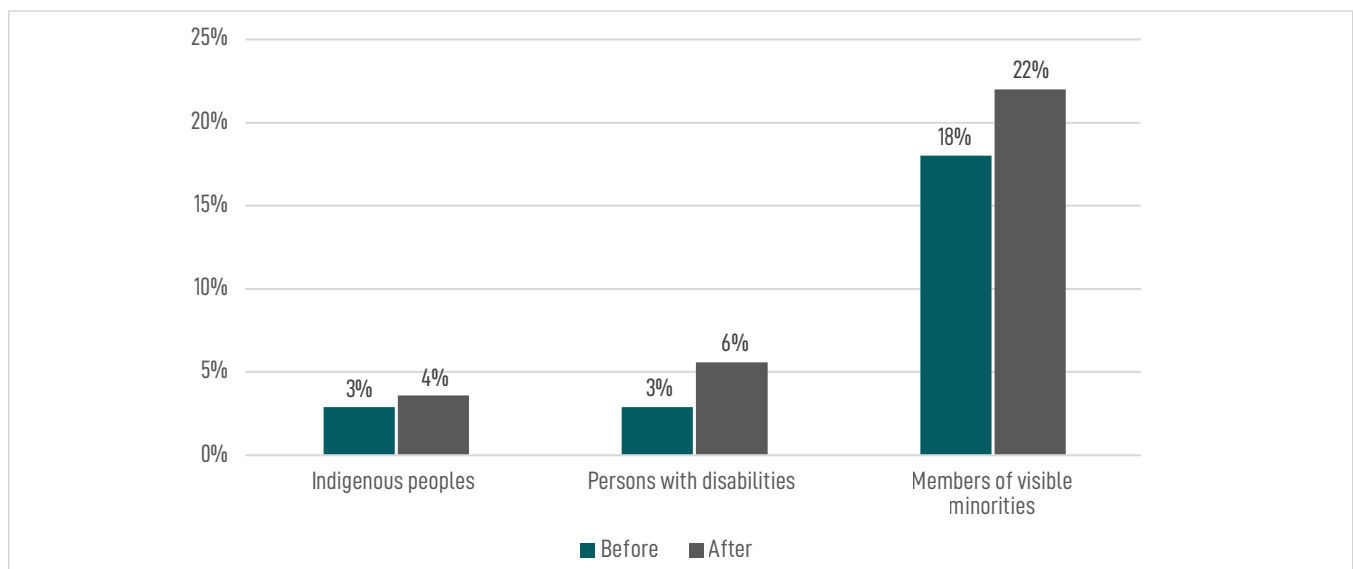


Graph 4 presents the major organizational factor identified through this research: employers who improved their equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategies in the last 5 years saw an increase in the representation rates of the 3 designated groups.

- Representation of Indigenous peoples was approximately 1.2 times higher after improvements (increasing from approximately 3% to 4%)
- Representation of persons with disabilities almost doubled after improvements (from approximately 3% to 6%)
- Representation of members of visible minorities was approximately 1.2 times higher after improvements (from 18% to 22%)

GRAPH 4

Representation rates before and after employers improved their EDI strategies, by designated group (percentage)



Practical ways

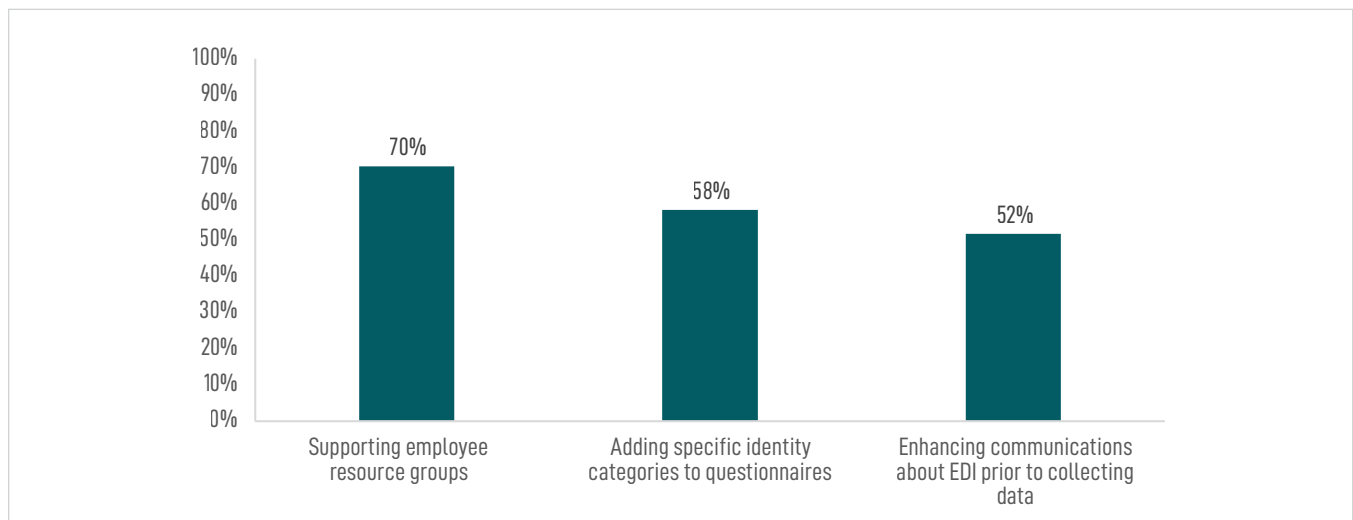
The most effective way to improve self-identification is to implement more robust equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices. This will likely take time to produce meaningful results, but the process can get started with a few simple changes that employers can more readily implement.

Graph 5 presents EDI measures most likely to improve self-identification data.

- 70% of employers that began supporting employee resource groups (ERGs) in the past five years saw improvements in self-identification data.
- 57% of employers who added specific identity categories to their questionnaire saw improvements in self-identification data.
- 52% of the employers that enhanced communications about EDI prior to collecting data (for instance, through self-identification campaigns) saw an improvement in self-identification data.

GRAPH 5

Employers that saw improvements in self-identification data after improving their EDI strategies, by EDI measure (percentage)



SUMMARY FROM THE WORKPLACE EQUITY DIVISION: THE SPIRAL OF EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

In a context where members of designated groups experience disadvantages in employment, self-identification is predictably a challenge. Many designated group members do not want to attract unnecessary attention to themselves in the workplace. In some instances, designated group members may believe that their identity is not relevant to the employer. In other cases, they may believe that their identity will not remain confidential or fear their identification will cause negative consequences.

Yet, self-identification is a crucial element of employment equity. Without this data, it is more difficult to analyze the workforce, review policies and practices, and monitor progress.

The project showed that the very implementation of employment equity measures may help with the self-identification of members of designated groups. Reluctance to self-identify can therefore be seen, at least in part, as a potential symptom of inequality.

Employment equity measures are both supported by and supportive of data collection.

How can we overcome this challenge? With action and time.

Employment equity is a dynamic process through which employers must use data and measures over time to achieve equality. Data supports the measures, which in turn help to collect more accurate data, which then supports the implementation of even better measures, bringing the organization closer to equality.

This process may appear circular, but it is better thought of as a spiral, along which employers can move downward or upward, depending on the path followed. Waiting for the perfect data before taking measures will take employers down the spiral; lack of action will be detrimental to the data and imperfect data will keep employers inactive. Acting on the data available will take employers up the spiral; their actions will improve their data, which will support further actions.

Reluctance to self-identify is both a call to attention and a call to action. Acting toward equality is demonstrating to employees why it matters to self-identify.

FIGURE 1
The spiral of employment equity



ABOUT THE MALATEST RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

For this multi-year project, Malatest completed a literature review and 5 streams of original research:

- Interviews of 39 key stakeholders, including employer and community associations
- A survey of 139 LEEP or FCP employers, used in combination with administrative data submitted to the Labour Program by employers
- A survey of 978 LEEP or FCP employees, which included questions on the groups to which they belong and whether they self-identify to their employer
- Focus groups and interviews with 35 members of designated groups, which included questions on the reasons why they may or may not self-identify to their employer
- Quantitative tests of different survey approaches with 2,301 Canadians, to see which one yielded the highest representation rates for each designated group

CONTACT US

For additional information,
contact us at ee-eme@servicecanada.gc.ca