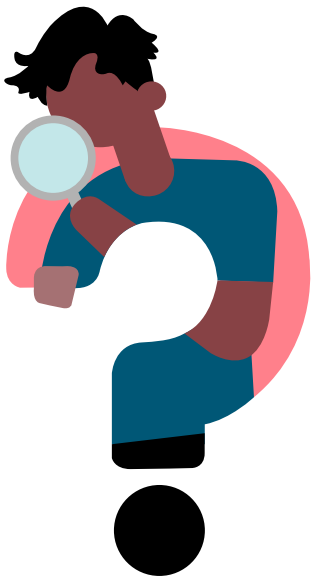
Getting diversity data right: what employers should know about engaging young employees

What you need to know

- **Disclosure is an organisational challenge**: it's about more than communications; wider organisational factors can influence whether employees share their data,
- **Solutions can be simple and cost effective**: improving diversity data collection doesn't necessarily require complex interventions.
- **Understanding and trust are key**: employees need to recognise, trust and understand why the request is being made.
- **There is no one-size-fits-all approach**: organisations need to test and learn what works for them. Measure results and use evidence, not intuition.
- **Data should drive action**: workforce data creates value when it is used to improve outcomes.

Why diversity data matters

High-quality diversity data is key to helping employers understand their workforce, identify inequalities in areas such as recruitment, retention, progression and pay, and target action to address them. But it all starts with employees choosing to share their diversity information.



Employees may be reluctant to disclose for a range of reasons, including concerns about trust, stigma or how their data will be used. When employees don't share their diversity information, employers are left with an incomplete picture of their workforce, limiting their ability to identify where action may be needed.

There is limited evidence about what works to increase disclosure. To help address this gap, Youth Futures Foundation partnered with Kier Group and the Behavioural Insights Team to test two versions of an email campaign asking Kier employees to share their diversity information.

What we did

We ran a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT), designed to provide robust evidence about what works, with more than 9,000 Kier employees. Employees were randomly allocated to receive one of two email campaigns asking them to share their diversity information.

Both campaigns asked employees to share the same information through a link to a Microsoft Form, but they differed in how the request was communicated. One used a more standard employer communications approach, providing more information about why Kier wanted to collect the data and how it would be used. The other drew on behavioural insights by making the emails shorter, more visual and personalised, and focused on the personal benefits of disclosure.

What we found

Among young employees, the standard campaign generated greater disclosure than the behaviourally informed (BI) approach:

- More than one in four (26.9%) of those receiving the standard campaign disclosed all nine diversity characteristics compared with around one in six (15.9%) receiving the BI campaign.
- Young employees receiving the BI campaign were also more likely to provide no diversity information at all, and were less likely to provide information about disability, neurodiversity, ethnicity and social mobility, across both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged identities.
- The difference between the two campaigns was whether young employees engaged with the request at all, rather than how much information they shared once they responded.
- More employees receiving the BI campaign actually responded following the first email – it was only after the two reminders where the standard campaign received more responses overall.
- Both campaigns were relatively low-cost to deliver. The estimated cost per employee who disclosed was £1.46 for the standard campaign and £1.47 for the behaviourally informed campaign. As the standard campaign generated more disclosure at a similar cost per response, the behaviourally informed approach did not offer a value-for-money advantage.

What we learnt

The results were not necessarily what we expected. Employees interviewed after the trial valued some features of the BI campaign, including its shorter format, personalisation and clear indication of how long the form would take. But across the trial, these features did not result in greater disclosure.

The evaluation points to some possible explanations. The standard campaign gave employees more information about why Kier wanted the data and how it would be used. Employees wanted to understand the organisational purpose behind the request and feel confident about how their information would be handled.

Who asks can matter too. In the BI campaign, a named senior sender made the request feel important but was not always seen as the most relevant messenger. A prominent call-to-action button designed to make responding easier may also have prompted caution among employees used to being warned about unfamiliar links.

Taken together, the findings suggest that diversity disclosure is about more than just the wording of an email campaign. Employees must understand the purpose of the request, trust how their information will be handled and find it easy to respond. That doesn't mean making the intervention more complex. It means getting the fundamentals right.

What employers should do now

The evaluation does not support adopting the BI campaign in its current form instead of the standard approach. However, the findings offer useful lessons for employers seeking to improve diversity disclosure:

- **Combine the strongest features of both campaigns:** Keep communications concise, personalised and easy to act on, while clearly explaining why information is being collected, how it will be used and how it will be protected.
- **Make disclosure easy and accessible:** Use straightforward forms and clear questions, and consider other trusted channels alongside email to reach different parts of your workforce.
- **Build trust around sensitive information:** Be clear about confidentiality and how information will be used, particularly where employees may be more hesitant to disclose.
- **Plan for effective delivery:** Ensure sufficient staff capacity, reliable communication systems, accurate contact details and early coordination between relevant teams.
- **Test and adapt your approach:** Different approaches may work at different stages, so test what works and use the results to refine communications and reminders.

"Having good workforce data is essential if we want to understand where we are today and where we need to get to. But with limited time and resources, we also need evidence to tell us where to focus our efforts.

That's why trials like this are so valuable: they help us move beyond assumptions, understand what works and invest where we can make the biggest difference."

Tracey Collins, People Capability & Transformation Director, Kier

