

QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN NOVA SCOTIA

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Executive Summary

In 2022, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate provided funding to the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO) to lead the development of a Quality of Life Index (QOLI) for people with disabilities as well as a baseline report. This draft index is the first step in developing a Quality of Life Index that will be used by disability organizations, the Nova Scotia Government, Prescribed Public Sector Bodies, and other stakeholders to monitor the protection of human rights of people with disabilities and the implementation of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act. Extensive work has already been done by Engage Nova Scotia to develop a Quality-of-Life Index for Nova Scotians. This current project recognizes the need to enhance that index while also establishing baseline indicators for measuring progress under Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act. Central to this work is a rights-based approach that considers human rights obligations under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD), to which Canada is a signatory.

Quality of life indicators are used to measure progress on well-being and quality of life of a population. Governments often use survey data to measure quality of life indicators in order to collect evidence that will inform policy and funding decisions (Statistics Canada, 2023). Some indicators can be objectively measured by a third party while subjective indicators depend upon the point of view from which they are measured. Both are necessary for understanding quality of life.

In developing the proposed indicators, an analysis of several key documents was undertaken. These documents included, but were not limited to, Engage Nova Scotia's Quality of Life Index report, Access by Design 2030 (which identifies a roadmap for meeting obligations under Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act), Committee recommendations made under obligations of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Canadian Survey on Disability. The proposed domains and Indicators are as follows:

Domain 1: Education. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes the right to education for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others (United Nations, 2008). Indicators in this area span the lifetime and are concerned with accessibility and inclusion. This domain outlines 14 indicators that measure opportunities to access education; accessible navigation and communication related to supports and services; recruitment and application procedures; the learning environment; learning resources; diverse, inclusive, and accessible instruction; accommodations; language access; appropriate assessments; transition planning; family involvement; completion rates; non-discrimination; and transportation.

Domain 2: Built Environment. This includes indicators specific to the built environment, but additional indicators in this area may intersect other sections outlined in this index. This domain measures accessibility of the built environment across six areas: public places; outdoor pathways; housing; transit stops; indoor spaces; and emergency access.

Domain 3: Employment. Access to employment is a significant social determinant of health and has a notable impact on the quality of life of people with disabilities. While closely related to

Domain 13 on Economic Security, it is distinct due to the various components of employment that need to be considered beyond income levels. There are eight employment related indicators; accessible recruitment; quality of working conditions; employment accommodations; inclusion in the workplace; career development; return to work; emergency preparedness; and time spent on daily commute to and from work.

Domain 4: Goods and Services. This domain pertains to the delivery and reception of goods and services in the province. How service providers interact with people with disabilities, how people with disabilities access goods and services, and how they access assistive devices all fall within this domain. Specifically, four indicators are access to goods and services; access to assistive aids, devices or technologies; accessible ICT and telephone services; and attendant support.

Domain 5: Information and Communication. This area aims to ensure that all Nova Scotians have equal access to information. The CRPD makes it clear that people with disabilities have a right to information and indicates that information should be received in accessible formats, in a timely manner and without additional costs (United Nations, 2008). The six indicators in this area are: equitable access to information; timely access to information and communication; privacy maintained when ICT is offered in alternative formats; access to visual, audible, speech, and closed function ICT; service navigation; and time spent on accessing information.

Domain 6: Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure. Standards for public transportation and transportation infrastructure are important for enabling all Nova Scotians to travel more easily in urban and rural areas across the province (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018). Transportation affects all areas of life, education, work, health, social, access to goods and services. It includes bus, train, and air travels. The six indicators in this area are: access to accessibility information and general service information; accessible transportation; service interruptions; equitable fares; qualifying for and accessing accessible specialized transportation; and time spent accessing transportation and making daily commutes.

Domain 7: Community Vitality. Strong communities and community engagement are important for individual well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us the importance of socialization and connection to others. Resilient communities and our sense of belonging to community impact our quality of life. We need to understand the extent to which communities in Nova Scotia welcome and include people with disabilities. Six indicators in this area are: sense of belonging to community; ability to live independently in the community; virtual access; community safety; access to volunteer activities; and time spent in community and with friends and/or family.

Domain 8: Democratic Engagement. Article 29 of the CRPD pertains to participation in political and public life. It states that, “States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others” (United Nations, 2008, p. 21). Historically, Nova Scotia saw regular increases in democratic engagement followed by decreases in more recent years. This domain should also include engagement in provincial and municipal elections and with government events such as town halls and other political events as desired. Specifically, two primary indicators in this area are: engagement in federal, provincial, and municipal elections; and knowledge and investment in political issues.

Domain 9: Healthy Populations. More than ever, our health care systems are facing a crisis. The CRPD addresses rights to health for people with disabilities in Articles 21 and 25 (United Nations, 2008). Healthy populations go beyond the healthcare system to social determinants of health addressed throughout this Index. Many areas of our daily life impact our health and health outcomes. This set of indicators is concerned with understanding the extent to which people with disabilities have access to what they need to live a healthy life and how they rate their overall physical and mental health. Nine indicators in this area are: access to medical, specialist and physician services; access to medication; access to therapies and services; access to emergency services; access to quality food; physical Activity, recreation and fitness; physical and mental health status; the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic; and time spent on health-related activities.

Domain 10: Justice. For many people with disabilities access to justice is hindered by disability related barriers. Confidence in the justice system and police has been captured in the first quality of life survey conducted by Engage Nova Scotia (2014) under the Community Vitality domain. Given the finding of systemic discrimination against people with disabilities found by the Nova Scotia Court of Appeals in 2021 (Disability Rights Coalition v. Nova Scotia (Attorney General), 2021), indicators in the area vital. Article 4 of the CRPD outlines commitments in this area (United Nations, 2008). Four key indicators are: awareness of rights and legal options; access to the justice system; trust in the justice system, and effective navigation of the justice system.

Domain 11: Leisure and Culture. Leisure and culture can include physical activity, parks, live events, and vacations. This domain also includes arts and cultural activities. For people with disabilities, their access to leisure and culture may be impacted by disability related barriers. It is important to capture the extent to which people with disabilities are engaging in leisure and cultural activities and to understand what barriers, if any, they are facing. Article 30 of the CRPD addresses the right to participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport (United Nations, 2008). Four indicators in this area are: accessibility of activities and events; participation in and attendance at activities and events; time spent on activities and events; and volunteering.

Domain 12: The Natural Environment. According to Engage Nova Scotia (2014) “environmental protection involves the prevention of waste and damage while revitalizing our ecosystems and working towards the sustainability of all our resources” (p. 46) Environmental sustainability is becoming a growing concern as we experience more frequent weather events that impact our daily lives. Opportunities to contribute to environmental sustainability as well as the impact of weather events on people with disabilities needs to be carefully considered here. Three key indicators here are quality of the natural environment; access to opportunities to contribute to environmental sustainability; and safety during weather events.

Domain 13: Economic Security. One of the strongest social determinants of health, and by extension well-being, is income and income security. Income and income supports are required to meet basic needs, but they also impact health and health outcomes, housing security, access to education, transportation options, socialization decisions and all areas of life which impact our quality of life. Given the high rates of poverty among persons with disabilities, and the bi-directional link between poverty and disability, economic security is one of the most important areas to consider in measuring well-being and quality of life for people with disabilities just as it is for those without disabilities. Without success in this area, all other areas will be affected. The

impact of economic security is measured throughout this document particularly when measuring denial to access of services, supports, equipment, events, and locations due to financial barriers. Three key indicators for this domain are: income or income supports; affordable and accessible housing, and the ability to save for the future.

Background

The rights-based approach is increasingly being utilized in quality-of-life research, the importance of which is can be defined as follows:

The UNCRPD focuses on the macro-level systems that are expected to create proper socioeconomic and political conditions for persons with disabilities, with a special focus on their immediate living conditions. These conditions should be built to ensure that persons with disabilities have the potential to enjoy a high quality of life (QoL). The notion of QoL reflects subjective and objective assessments of people's living conditions at the individual level. Hence, QoL can be seen as a link between the general values and rights embodied in the UNCRPD in particular, and the personal life of the individual [2–5]. The crucial aspect of this framework is the relationship between the individual QoL and the environment, understood as the socioeconomic as well as the technical conditions in which persons with disabilities function [6]. (Grabowska et al. 2021, p. 2)

This document outlines objective and subjective indicators designed to measure individual quality of life in a number of key areas that impact socioeconomic and material conditions under which people with disabilities live. In developing these indicators, an analysis of several key documents was undertaken. These documents included Engage Nova Scotia's Quality of Life Index report, Access by Design 2030 (which identifies a roadmap for meeting obligations under Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act), Committee recommendations made under obligations of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Canadian Survey on Disability, and other pertinent documents outlined throughout this report. This tentative set of indicators are presented to help measure progress under the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act and to help establish a quality of life baseline for people with disabilities in Nova Scotia. This report is divided into 13 areas; the first six are directly correlated to the areas of life identified in the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act. The remaining seven areas are derived from Engage Nova Scotia's quality of life index work as well as key domains outlined in the CRPD.

An Advisory Council has been established and consists of approximately 25 members who are representatives of cross disability organizations, people with lived experience of disability, and members of African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities. The Advisory Council members will be given an opportunity to provide feedback on indicators outlined in this report. Upon approval a preliminary set of indicators will be finalized to be used during public consultations with Nova Scotians with disabilities about a proposed Quality of Life Index for people with disabilities.

Defining Disability

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “disability is an evolving concept and ... disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (United Nations, 2006, p. 1). This project follows this line of thinking and the social model of disability. The 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) (Statistics Canada, 2022) also bases its approach to disability in the social model which describes disability as the result of the interaction between a person’s functional limitation and barriers in society. For the purposes of data collection, the range of disability experiences captured by the CSD include eleven types of disabilities: developmental, memory, dexterity, learning, seeing, hearing, mental health related, mobility, flexibility, pain related, and episodic disabilities. (Statistics Canada, 2022). Neuro-divergent should be added to future surveys that capture disability type.

What are Quality of Life Indicators?

Quality of life indicators are used to measure progress on well-being and quality of life of a population. Governments often use survey data to measure quality of life indicators in order to gather evidence that will inform policy and funding decisions (Statistics Canada, 2023). Some indicators can be objectively measured by a third party while subjective indicators depend upon the point of view from which they are measured. Michalos (2014) distinguishes between these two types of indicators in the following way:

Subjective social indicators are statistics that have some significance for measuring the quality of life from the point of view of some particular subject(s). They are contrasted with objective social indicators that are statistics that have some significance for measuring the quality of life from the point of view of any independent observer.

We measure both objective and subjective indicators of quality of life because as described by Eurostat (N.D), “Ultimately, objective situations and subjective perceptions combine to determine an individual's wellbeing” (n.p.). The following are a proposed set of subjective and objective quality of life indicators for persons with disabilities.

1. Education

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) recognizes the right to education for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others (United Nations, 2008). According to Engage Nova Scotia (2014), “Education is a process that begins before school age and is reflected in preschool arrangements such as childcare and early childhood education. It also continues beyond elementary and high school, to college, university, and professional training through apprenticeships. Education continues as lifelong learning” (p.18). Indicators in this area for people with disabilities will span the lifetime and are concerned with accessibility and inclusion. Access by Design, 2030 identifies priorities, “Education Standards in this area will

help to create learning environments in which all students can participate. These standards could address how students with disabilities get the instruction and learning materials they need. The standards will apply to primary, secondary, and post-secondary education” (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018, p. 8)

Indicator 1: Opportunity to access education and courses

According to Engage Nova Scotia (2014), “Since 2010, tuition fees for undergraduate students in Nova Scotia are moderately higher than the average paid by students elsewhere in Canada” (p. 20). As such, affordability for tuition for courses should be measured here. To build on Engage Nova Scotia’s indicators (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014) access to education includes opportunities and availability of post-secondary education and also classes of interest in secondary school levels.

Sample Questions:

1. What type of education institution did/do you attend?
2. Did you attend this institution on a full time or part time basis?
3. Are you studying part time because of your disability? see Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022)
4. Are you able to take courses of interest during your studies? (see also Engage Nova Scotia’s QoL index).

Indicator 2: Accessible navigation and communication related to supports and services

Following recommendations from the Education Standards Development Committee (2023), information about processes for enrolment in school, support for families, and communication about programs, services, and policies should be available in accessible formats including plain language. Similarly, assistive aids, devices, and technologies should be provided to students to help with learning and performing tasks and activities related to their education. These should be provided to students in their naturally occurring environment. Services and supports should also be provided in a timely manner.

Sample Questions:

1. Was information about services and supports made available to you in a way that is accessible to you?
2. Were processes related to accommodations made clear to you?
3. Were assistive devices, support services or modifications provided to help support you in performing tasks and activities related to your education.
4. Did the supports provided meet your needs?

(The Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022) has extensive questions on types of accommodations and assistive devices)

Indicator 3: Accessible recruitment and application procedures

In line with recommendations from the Education Standards Committee (2023), private schools must provide accessible information about the application process and services and supports available to students during recruitment procedures.

Sample Questions:

1. I was given appropriate support during the application process for studying at my institution of interest.
2. Information about supports and services relevant to my needs was easy to find while applying to study at the post-secondary level.

Indicator 4: Accessible environment

At all levels of learning from early years to post-secondary and beyond, learning environments should be accessible in a number of ways: once again following recommendations from the Education Standards Committee (2023), spaces should be physically accessible, adhere to principles of Deaf and Hard of Hearing space layout in learning environments, have flexible seating and work stations, and include access to American Sign Languages, captioning and assistive technology, and amplification systems. Virtual learning platforms should also be accessible.

Importantly, learning goes beyond the classroom to extra-curricular activities, field trips, science laboratories, cafeterias and other spaces within schools and post-secondary institutions.

Sample Questions

1. I am able to access classroom spaces.
2. I am able to participate in classroom activities.
3. I am able to interact and communicate with my peers.
4. I am able to access science labs.
5. I have access to extra curricular activities such as sports or clubs that I am interested in
6. I can access cafeterias at my school.
7. I can access services available at my school.

Indicator 5: Accessible learning resources

Materials for learning should be accessible to diverse learners with disabilities. Early childhood learning play equipment should be physically accessible. Other materials should be in various accessible formats. Learning and instructional materials should be available in various accessible formats and languages to accommodate learners. In line with the recommendations from the Education Standards Committee (2023), audio and visual materials should be high quality and appropriately captioned or with transcription. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles will help to meet this standard.

Sample Questions:

1. Video and audio course materials are accessible to me through closed captioning.

2. I am able to access course material in a way that is accessible to me.
3. I have access to devices that help make course material accessible to me.

Indicator 6: Diverse, inclusive, accessible instruction

As recommended in Access by Design, 2030 educators should, “integrate information about disability rights and accessibility into relevant school curriculum areas as they are renewed and developed” (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018, p. 11). Additionally, as recommended by the Education Standards Committee (2023), curriculum should integrate diverse experiences of disability, race, culture, sexuality, and gender.

Sample Questions

1. When course material contains life examples, I see myself reflected in these examples.

Indicator 7: Accommodations provided

In line with the CRPD (United Nations, 2008). In pursuing the right to education, reasonable and timely access to accommodations for learners should be provided.

Sample Questions:

1. I have access to a notetaker if needed.
2. I am permitted to record lectures as needed.
3. I have access to a portable note-taking device.
4. I have received accommodations in a timely manner.

Note: The Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022) has additional examples of accommodations

Indicator 8: Language access

While language access is identified throughout the education indicators in this Index, a specific indicator is noted here to ensure that Deaf and Hard of Hearing students have access to education, play, and extra-curricular activities in American Sign Languages.

Sample questions

- 1) An American Sign Language interpreter is available to me for the following:
 - a) Classes
 - b) Extra curricular activities
 - c) when interacting with my peers
 - d) For labs and other course activities outside of the classroom
 - e) An ASL interpreter is not available to me.

Indicator 9: Appropriate assessments

The Education Standards Development Committee (2023) makes a recommendation to provide authentic assessments to learners at all levels of learning that are culturally and linguistically

responsive, available in multiple formats, use appropriate assistive technology, and are relevant and reflective of diverse experiences and perspectives.

Sample Questions

1. I am provided extra time for assignments, tests and exams as needed.
2. I am able to complete my examinations orally if needed.
3. I am able to write my tests and exams in an alternative location as needed.

Indicator 10: Effective transition planning

Transitions between levels of education and between institutions can be difficult for learners, generally. In line with the Education Standards Committee (2023), supports and transition services for students with disabilities should ensure that students and their families are actively included in planning, resources are accessible and support personnel are available before, during, and after transitions.

Sample Questions

1. I was given appropriate supports while planning to transition from high school to post-secondary or college level education.
2. I was given the information I needed to make decisions while planning for post-secondary or college.

Indicator 11: Family involvement

In decision-making and policy development about educational priorities impacting students with disabilities, students and their families should be meaningfully engaged in these processes and consulted to ensure that the child's right to access education is met.

Sample Question

1. I and/or my family members were given opportunities to give input to plans for my studies.

Indicator 12: Completion rates

Building on Engage Nova Scotia's Quality of Life Index (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014), completion rates for school and post-secondary education should be measured.

Sample Question

1. Did you complete your studies?
2. If not, did you discontinue your studies due to your disability? See Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022)

Indicator 13: Non-discrimination

The education indicators outlined here are primarily focused on access and inclusion. Importantly students with disabilities are entitled to education and everything this entails on an equal basis with others. Students with disabilities should not be denied access due to a failure to

accommodate or on the basis of disability. This right to non-discrimination is clearly outlined in the CRPD. For example, “5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education, and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities” (United Nations, 2008, p. 18).

Sample Questions

1. Were you denied access to a course due to your disability?
2. Were you denied access to extra-curricular activities due to your disability?
3. Were you denied access to labs or field placements due to your disability?

Indicator 14: Transportation to school

An important aspect of inclusive education is the ability to get to and from school; whether at the primary, secondary, or post secondary level. Following the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2012), it is recommended that public schools which provide transportation to students provide accessible transportation for students with disabilities or an equivalent alternative. Students should be identified prior to the school year commencing and arrangements made that are suitable and safe for the student. Pick-up and drop-off zones for students with disabilities, whether it is private pick-up or public transportation, should be clearly marked and unobstructed so that they are accessible when and as needed.

For post-secondary students, accessible transportation should be available at a cost no greater than the cost of a standard fare. This indicator measures the extent to which students have equitable, safe, and accessible transportation to and from school.

Sample Questions:

1. Do you have accessible transportation options for going to and from school?
 - a. If yes, are these options reliable in scheduled pick-up and drop off times?
 - b. Are these options available at the same cost as standard transportation?
2. If no, do you rely upon private transportation?
3. If someone drives you to school, is there a space clearly marked and accessible for drop-off and pick up from school?
4. If you drive yourself to school are there accessible parking spots clearly marked at your educational institution?

2. Built Environment

The Built Environment Standards Development Committee (2021) was the first to make recommendations to the Minister of Justice. It was thought to be the easiest area to identify achievable goals under the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act. This section includes indicators specific to the built environment, but additional indicators in this area may intersect with other domains in this index. Access by Design, 2030 identifies the need for accessible buildings and outdoor spaces in Nova Scotia so everyone has equal access to live, work, learn, and play. Access by Design 2030 identifies standards in the built environment on how to make buildings, streets, sidewalks,

and shared spaces accessible for all. The standards developed in this area apply first to the government of Nova Scotia, secondly to public sector bodies and finally to other entities such as the private sector. The goal to make Nova Scotia accessible can be achieved, at least in part, through assessing accessibility of space owned and leased by the government and to develop a plan to make them fully accessible by 2030. This includes incorporating the building code for Nova Scotia, its accessibility requirements and improving accessibility to Nova Scotia courts, provincial parks, beaches, campgrounds, and sports fishing sites. (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018)

When it comes to the built environment public spaces include many different components. In order to ensure accessibility for all, the indoor built environment, the outdoor built environment, and all of the different facets that this includes need to be considered.

There are a number of areas of life to consider when we think about quality of life. Things like sports and recreation, parks and wildlife, cultural activities, services and supports, health services, restaurants, and leisure as well as movement between these various locations.

Work on quality of life has looked at things like attendance at performing arts, live performances, parks, recreation, leisure, and other cultural activities but we can not examine participation in these things without also considering accessibility to them. The level of accessibility also has implications for opportunity for social activity and social connectivity which is important for a quality of life. It will also impact the level and the extent to which we feel included in our communities.

Indicator 1: Access to public places

The Built Environment Standard Development Committee (2021) identifies universal design principles ideal for provincial and municipal projects, particularly as they are being designed. Additionally, the accessibility requirements of the Nova Scotia building code and related amendments are outlined extensively in the Built Environment Standard Development Committee (2021) recommendations. These can help identify areas that are important for measuring quality of life.

Accessible building entrances and parking spaces allow individuals easy access to public buildings. This requires that the space is physically accessible, has appropriate colour contrast and appropriate signage. Physically, accessible spaces require appropriate curb cuts, wide enough doors and entryways and other features that make space accessible for people with mobility devices and sensory impairments.

Sample questions:

- 1) I can easily access public buildings.
- 2) If not, which of the following barriers did you encounter?
 - a) Entrances and exits not accessible.
 - b) Insufficient lighting
 - c) Insufficient signage
 - d) Insufficient color contrast
 - e) Lack of curb cuts

- f) No ramp available
- 3) I have no trouble finding accessible parking when in public.

Note: See Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022) for additional questions.

Indicator 2: Outdoor pathways

Just as individuals need to be able to access spaces, the walkways and pathways that allow people to travel between locations also need to be accessible. The ability to attend festivals, events, services, and other kinds of activities is dependent upon whether people can access the pathways to those spaces. According to the Built Environment Standard Development Committee, poles, wires, signage and other infrastructure should not create barriers that prevent pathways from being clear. Consideration needs to be given to things like construction that might impact the accessibility of outdoor spaces and walkways. Similarly, the Nova Scotia Building Code as outlined by the Built Environment Standard Development Committee (2021) identifies ways to ensure the pathways are accessible, ranging from things like sidewalks, roadways and parking lots that are detectable to people with vision loss and other disabilities. Any seating that is on the path of travel should be level and firm. Resting areas are important for accessibility. The building code also has regulations to help ensure pathways are accessible in their slope and width while being clear of debris and having proper signage and tactile information that are easily identifiable.

Sample Questions:

1. When you are travelling in public, are pathways accessible with sufficient.
 - a. lighting
 - b. signage
 - c. rest areas
 - d. smooth and level surfaces
 - e. clear pathways free of debris
2. When construction zones are present, accessible alternative pathways are provided.

Note: Individuals may not be accustomed to being asked about specific kinds of accessibility and may not even know they have a right to it. Asking specific questions in this area could help people with disabilities think about and feel comfortable with expressing the level of accessibility they experience and require.

Indicator 3: Housing

According to Engage Nova Scotia's Quality of Life research, Nova Scotians spend more of their income to meet their housing needs than any other province in Canada. In 2014, Nova Scotians were reporting 47.1% of their net income going towards shelter (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014). Given the housing crisis that we are currently experiencing in Nova Scotia and the accessible, affordable housing crisis that people with disabilities experience in this province an indicator to measure accessible housing, in close proximity to accessible transportation needs to be included.

Sample Question:

1. Do you feel you have accessible and affordable housing options that meet your needs?
This could include:
 - a. Accessible entrances
 - b. Space usage
 - c. Lighting and/or sound

Indicator 4: Transit stops

Though there will be specific recommendations for indicators around transportation. Transit stops themselves fall under the built environment and should be considered here. Transit stops should have appropriate curb cuts, proper signage, and accessible shelters where applicable. This indicator measure whether people with disabilities have access to transit stops that meet their needs in the abovementioned way. Do inaccessible transit stops, for example, prevent people from traveling within their communities?

Question:

1. Transit stops and shelters are accessible in the following ways.
 - a. Signage
 - b. Lighting
 - c. Curb cuts
 - d. Accessible transit shelters where transit shelters exist
 - e. Announcement boards at transit stops (if applicable)

Indicator 5: Indoor spaces

Many of the services which impact our quality of life are indoor public spaces. Whether we are attending community events or other kinds of activities; cultural, recreational, sports events, or accessing services, indoor spaces that are available to the public need to be accessible. There are a number of regulations for indoor spaces that can be found in the Built Environment Standard Development Committee (2021) recommendations. Whether or not people have access to accessible washrooms, barrier free paths of travel, accessible entrances, and spaces accessible for individuals with sensory disabilities by way of lighting, quiet spaces, and other appropriate measures are important.

Sample Questions:

1. When I go to public events or to access public services, spaces are accessible, with proper lighting, wayfinding information, and quiet spaces as required.
2. There is adequate signage in public places with icons, symbols and text that I can easily understand.

Indicator 6: Emergency access

Access to emergency services and to assistance during emergencies can be a serious concern for people with disabilities. Whether or not individuals feel supported during times of emergency is important because feeling safe significantly impacts our quality of life. This includes whether

safety protocols include accessibility information that is known to everyone and whether or not things like healthcare services are accessible in times of emergency (this indicator overlaps with the healthy population domain).

Sample Questions:

1. In an emergency, I could get the information I need in a way that is accessible to me.
2. If I needed access to emergency medical services, I feel I would be able to access them and have communication with medical staff in a way that is accessible to me.
3. In times of emergency, I have a safe space with the supports I need.

3. Employment

Access to employment is a significant social determinant of health and has a notable impact on the quality of life of people with disabilities. While closely related to the Economic Security domain, it is distinct due to the various components of employment that need to be considered beyond income levels. Engage Nova Scotia (2014) found that age and income are linked to ratings of health. Access by Design 2030 identifies key actions in this area to, “Assess existing programs that provide support for the hiring, training, accommodation, and advancement of persons with disabilities in the workplace, and identify opportunities to improve them” (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018, p.12). Furthermore, the Government of Nova Scotia’s Accessibility Plan includes ensuring that training materials for the government includes information on recruiting and hiring people with disabilities into the public service (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018).

Engage Nova Scotia (2014) found that overall employment quality has improved in Nova Scotia since 2002. People with disabilities should expect the same quality as their colleagues and peers. Article 27 of the CRPD clearly articulates the right of persons with disabilities to the opportunity to work in a freely chosen labour market or workplace that is inclusive and accessible. People with disabilities also have the right to favorable work conditions on an equal basis with others (United Nations, 2008). The following indicators measure the extent to which people have access to meaningful, sustainable, and accessible employment as well as inclusive and non-discriminatory workplaces.

Indicator 1: Accessible recruitment

We know that some people with disabilities are unable to work due to their experience of disability. Here we want to understand whether a person who is able to work has access to employment opportunities and accessible recruitment efforts. Measuring the extent to which job advertisements are posted on digitally accessible platforms along with alternative forms of communication is important as well as ensuring that recruitment efforts in community settings are accessible to people with disabilities.

Sample Questions: [See Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022)]

1. Could you have worked in the last week if a suitable job were available?
2. Are you able to search for jobs on digital platforms or other means that are accessible to you?

3. Have you been offered accommodation options prior to job interviews?

Indicator 2: Quality of work

To enjoy a true quality of life, people need to have access to work that is meaningful and sustainable to them. This would include whether the work is permanent, temporary, or seasonal. Is the work part-time or full-time? What kind of opportunities exist within the workplace to advance, learn, and grow? Does the job match the individual's skills and/or training? This indicator also measures the extent which individuals feel valued and fulfilled with their work.

Sample Questions: [See Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022) for additional questions]

1. How many hours do you typically work per week?
2. Is your job full-time or part-time?
3. Is your job temporary, permanent or seasonal?
4. Does your job match your skills and training?
5. Are there opportunities for promotion or advancement at your work?
6. If you acquired a disability, are you doing the same kind of work you did at the time you acquired the disability?
7. Have you been given opportunities to do training or professional development related to your work?

Other questions may be:

8. Do you feel fulfilled in your job?
9. Do you feel your pay is fair for the work that you do?
10. Are you given opportunities to give input at your workplace regarding working conditions?

Indicator 3: Employment accommodations

In the workplace it is important to have appropriate accommodations to support a person to do their job effectively. Accommodations exist for different kinds of life circumstances (having a child, religious accommodations, family obligations, disability etc.). Much work still needs to be done to ensure that there are disability-confident employers aware of how to provide appropriate accommodations and of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Accommodations can range from physical, environmental, technological, and time-based.

Sample questions:

1. Upon starting a new job, has your employer communicated with you about accommodation options without first being prompted to do so?
2. Have you requested workplace accommodations?
 - a. If so, have you been provided with workplace arrangements or modifications to enable you to effectively do your job?
 - b. Have these accommodations been provided in a timely manner?
3. If yes, which accommodations have you received:

- a. modified duties
 - b. modified hours
 - c. working from home
 - d. human support (ASL interpreter, job coach, personal assistant)
 - e. technical aids
 - f. communication aids
 - g. ergonomic adaptations
 - h. Special supports
 - i. accessible parking
 - j. adapted washrooms
 - k. accessible physical environment - elevator, door width etc.
 - l. specialized transportation
4. Have you required accommodations but not asked for them?
- a. If so, why not?

Note: see the Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022) for further questions

Indicator 4: Inclusion in the workplace

In addition to accommodations, people with disabilities also need to feel included at their place of work. Some people with disabilities may be reluctant to request accommodations because of the negative perceptions and stigma that may come with that. Here it is important to gauge how people feel in their workplaces or when engaging with their employers. Also, how do they relate to their colleagues and managers?

Questions here might be:

1. At my workplace I feel I am treated equally by my colleagues
2. I am included in workplace events and feel comfortable attending them.
3. I feel comfortable interacting with my colleagues in ways that accommodate my communication needs.
4. I feel comfortable speaking to my employer about my accommodation needs.

Indicator 5: Career development and performance review

An important aspect of work life is the opportunity to advance in your job or career on an equal basis with others. When employers offer career development opportunities that allow for possibility of a position that offers more pay or responsibility, the accommodation needs of employees with disabilities need to be considered in this process. Similarly, performance reviews should also consider accommodation requirements of the employee so as to ensure the review is fair. The AODA (2012) offers advice in these areas.

Sample Questions:

1. Are you offered opportunities for career development or advancement on an equal basis with your colleagues in similar positions?
2. Are you provided with appropriate accommodations during performance reviews?

Indicator 6: Return to work

Sometimes employees are absent from work due to illness or disability. The AODA (2012) points to the significance of having appropriate processes and procedures in place to accommodate an employee in order to facilitate their return to work after an absence due to disability. This indicator measures whether individuals are properly accommodated in order to facilitate their return to work after an extended absence.

Sample questions:

1. Have you had to take a leave of absence from work due to illness, disability or injury?
2. Were you offered appropriate accommodations to facilitate your return to work?

Indicator 7: Emergency preparedness

It is important to feel safe at work. In times of emergency, the needs of persons with disabilities should be accounted for in a timely manner. This indicator measures the extent to which employees with disabilities feel confident that established workplace emergency measures have taken their specific needs into consideration. The AODA (2012) offers guidelines on how to ensure that individual workplace emergency plans are in place for persons with disabilities. This includes whether an employee has been consulted and agrees upon an individual plan that is clearly communicated to those who would be involved in implementing the plan. This may include a designate.

Sample Question:

1. Has your employer worked with you to clearly identify an emergency measures plan that accommodates your specific needs in the event of an emergency?

Indicator 8: Time spent on daily commute to and from work

Engage Nova Scotia (2014) has reported a steady decrease in the amount of time spent on daily commutes for people with paid employment. Time spent on commutes for persons with disabilities may be impacted by factors measured throughout this Index such as access to accessible transportation options and adequate assistive devices to meet the needs of daily life. This indicator will measure the time spent on daily commutes for people with disabilities with paid employment.

Sample question:

1. Do you experience delays in your daily commute to work due to availability of accessible transportation?

4. Goods and Services

This domain pertains to the delivery and reception of goods and services in the province. How service providers interact with people with disabilities, how people with disabilities access goods and services, and how they access assistive devices all fall within this domain. The Government of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Plan looks at communications and service delivery on government websites, across government departments, and in government procurement processes. One

possibility outlined in the plan is to potentially establish accessibility navigators to help people with disabilities access information and services (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018).

Indicator 1: Access to goods and services

The Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage provides funding for businesses, community organizations, and municipalities to make their goods and services more accessible to people with disabilities (Province of Nova Scotia, 2023). This indicator measures the extent to which people with disabilities can access goods or services in these areas in ways that are appropriate for them. The way that customer services representatives interact with consumers with disabilities also has an impact on a person's experience. Multiple barriers still exist particularly pertaining to the built environment within which goods and services are provided. Whether or not service providers attempt to accommodate individuals with disabilities when they encounter a barrier, can contribute to a person's sense of belonging. These interactions need to be considered.

Sample Questions:

1. Are you able to access municipal services that are available to the public in the following areas:
 - a. paying bills
 - b. recreation services
 - c. community events organized by the municipality (BBQs, fun days, etc)
 - d. transportation services
 - e. municipal waste services
 - f. building and land services
 - g. police services
 - h. fire services
2. If not, what barriers do you face?
 - a. built environment barriers
 - b. transportation barriers
 - c. communication barriers
 - d. information barriers
 - e. attitudinal barriers
 - f. financial barriers
3. Are you able to freely access businesses in your community? (restaurants, banking, communications, hotels, shopping)
4. If not, what barriers do you face?
 - a. environmental (side walks, curb cuts, lack of ramps, inaccessible entrances, signage, walkways)
 - b. transportation
 - c. communication
 - d. information barriers
 - e. attitudinal barriers
 - f. financial
5. Are you able to access community organizations that are of interest to you?

6. If not, what barriers do you face?
 - a. environmental barriers (side walks, curb cuts, lack of ramps, inaccessible entrances, signage, walkways)
 - b. transportation barriers
 - c. communication barriers
 - d. information barriers
 - e. attitudinal barriers
 - f. financial barriers
7. If you have encountered barriers when attempting to access goods and services, did you request assistance from a service provider or customer service representative?
 - a. Did the service provider or customer service representative attempt to find a solution to the barrier?

Indicator 2: Access to assistive aids, devices, or technologies

A significant influence on quality of life is whether people with disabilities have access to assistive aids, devices or technologies that support them in their daily tasks. The CSD (Statistics Canada, 2022) has captured data on access to assistive devices ranging from mobility devices, hearing and vision aids and technologies, braille, audio, and technology. This indicator measures whether people have access to these devices and the barriers that may exist to attaining them, as well as the impact of not having them when needed. This indicator measures whether people with disabilities have required and accessed such devices, what kinds of adaptations they need, accessing repairs needed and what personal expenses they incur related to their devices and aids. To ensure good quality of life people with disabilities should have access to aids, devices and technologies they need to perform their daily tasks. Repairs should be timely and not be so expensive as to impose additional barriers to receiving the repairs.

Sample Questions: [see the Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022) for further questions]

1. Do you require any of the following types of assistive devices?
 - a. Mobility or agility devices
 - b. Vision aids
 - c. Braille
 - d. Hearing aids
 - e. Technology (i.e. speech to text software)
2. Have you been unable to obtain any of the following devices you require?
 - a. Mobility or agility devices
 - b. Vision aids
 - c. Braille
 - d. Hearing aids
 - e. Technology (i.e.: speech to text software)
3. What barriers existed to prevent you from accessing it?
 - a. Financial

- b. Information
 - c. Appropriateness of the device
- 4. Have you ever had to pay for repairs to assistive devices for which you have not been reimburse?
- 5. Do you ever worry about what will happen if you lose access to your assistive devices due to damage or loss?
- 6. Have you ever been prevented from participating in a daily activity because you did not have the required assistive devices?
- 7. Have you required modification to these devices or aids?
- 8. Have you had to have any repairs done?
 - a. Were these repairs done in a timely manner?
 - b. Was the repair process easy to navigate?
 - c. Was the repair costly?
 - d. Was the repair paid for out-of-pocket?
- 9. Have you incurred any personal expenses related to your devices?

Indicator 3: Accessible ICT and telephone services

Employment and Social Development Canada (2023) identifies accessibility standards for ICT related to services such as banking (particularly telephone banking). Online digital platforms may be inaccessible to some users and given that online platforms may offer services at a lower price than in-person services or through speaking with an agent, barriers to using online platforms creates issues of unequal access. This indicator measures the extent to which telephone and online platforms used by various businesses and services are accessible. The AODA (2012) also gives guidelines for self-serve kiosks which are becoming increasingly available in the public sector. These should have accessibility features for persons with disabilities.

Sample Questions

1. Are you able to access and effectively use telephone services to pay bills, address financial issues or access other goods/services?
2. Where online platforms are available for accessing goods and services, is it easy to find accessible alternatives if needed?
3. Are you able to access self-serve kiosks when they are available? Consider the following:
 - a. physical location
 - b. text options
 - c. auditory options
 - d. lighting

Indicator 4: Attendant support

Many people with disabilities may require help with daily activities due to their condition. As such this support may be in the form of a formal service, personal support worker, or another type of help. Whether or not individuals have access to the support they need to assist with daily tasks or household responsibilities will impact their quality of life. This indicator measures the extent to which individuals are having their needs met in this area.

Sample Questions

1. Have you required help with daily activities due to your disability? This includes preparing meals, house cleaning, yard work, errands, attending appointments, banking, personal care, medical care dressing, taking medication)
2. Who helps you with these activities?
 - a. Family member living with you
 - b. Family member not living with you
 - c. Paid service
 - d. Unpaid service
3. Have you incurred personal expenses for the help you have received?
4. Have you needed help and not received it?
5. What barriers did you face?
 - a. financial
 - b. communication
 - c. information access
 - d. attitudinal
 - e. Other type

5. Information and Communication

This domain measures whether all Nova Scotians have equal access to information. Access by Design 2030 outlines accessible formats for information sharing (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018). Additionally, Article 2 of the CRPD provides good guidance on what communication includes,

languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader, and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology” (United Nations, 2008, p. 4).

The CRPD also makes it clear that people with disabilities have a right to “seek, receive, and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others” (United Nations, 2008, p. 14) and goes further to ensure that information should be received in accessible formats in a timely manner without additional cost. This offers insight into the kinds of questions relevant to measure experiences related to equal access to information and communication.

Employment and Social Development Canada (2023) is currently working on regulations related to ICT under the Accessible Canada Act. These regulations have informed many of the indicators outlined here.

Indicator 1: Equitable access to information

Information available to the general public should be made available in multiple formats to accommodate various communication needs and ensure equitable access to information. IT should also be physically accessible and accessible to individuals with various levels of cognition. Where information is primarily communicated by audio, verbally, or in writing. Alternative

methods of communication should be available at a cost no more than would be incurred by the general public. Following the AODA (2012) organizations should communicate with the public about alternative methods of communication. If information and communication is made available to the public via a kiosk, message board, display or other equipment, the height, width, and depth of the equipment should be physically accessible to wheelchair users and people with mobility devices so that they can reach controls and view information. The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (2021) offers guidelines in this area.

Information and communication should be accessible to people with limited cognition. The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (2021) suggests that ICT should have features and presentation that makes it easier to understand. This could include audio of text, text prediction, adjustable timings etc.

This indicator measures the level of accessibility of information and communication to the extent that it is offered to all individuals on an equal basis.

Sample Questions:

1. How often do you receive publicly available information in a format that is accessible to you?
 - a. Always
 - b. sometimes
 - c. rarely
 - d. never
2. Is information about methods of communication easy to find?
3. If you receive information in an alternative format, is it provided in a timely manner?
4. Have you had to pay for alternative forms of communication for information that is available to the general public?
5. Have you ever had to pay a fee to get access to information in an accessible format?
6. Have you been reimbursed for this expense?
7. Have you ever failed to receive a good or service because the information you needed about it was not provided in an accessible formation?
8. When accessing information in public, are kiosks, message boards, and displays accessible to you?
9. Is the information provided in public easy to understand and follow?

Indicator 2: Timely access to information and communication

It is important that information and communications made to the public offer alternative forms of communication at the same time. Having timely access to all forms of communication ensures that all Nova Scotians are treated equitably. This is especially important for things like health services or emergency notifications.

Sample Questions

1. Do you receive publicly available information at the same time as the general public?

2. If you needed access to information about emergency or health services, do you feel you would receive it in a timely manner?
3. If you are accessing other services in the community, are you able to get access to accessible information at the same time as others?

Indicator 3: Privacy maintained when ICT is offered in alternative formats

Where alternative formats for communication are provided, privacy should be maintained as it would be for the general public. The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (2021) gives examples of providing headsets where audio is being offered and not making masked characters audible to maintain personal and financial privacy. This indicator measures whether individuals have the same expectation and experiences of privacy as the general public.

Sample Question:

1. In instances where alternative formats are provided for information, do you feel that your privacy is maintained?

Indicator 4: Access to visual, audible, speech, and closed function ICT

Visual information should be provided so that people with low vision or no vision can still access this information. This may require screen reader capability, magnified print, appropriate color contrast, lighting, alternatives to color identification, and audio or tactile communication as an alternative to visual information (See the European Telecommunications Standards Institute, 2021). Sometimes information is made available in audio format as is the case with verbal announcements. When this type of communication is used, alternative formats should be available such as closed captioning or information provided on a screen. For communication methods where speech input is required, at least one alternative method should be made available for those who may be non-verbal or have limited use of speech. Keyboard or touch options are helpful alternatives.

Sometimes communication options require motion or hand strength. These options should have alternative modes of communication. The height of communication technology devices needs to also be considered given that some users may be wheelchair (or other mobility device) users.

When computers or software are locked down to prevent end-use manipulation of programs or service software, these devices have closed function which prevent the addition of accessibility software or peripherals, alternatives should be provided. The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (2021) has guidance in this area.

This indicator measures the extent to which alternative methods of communication are available in instances where the primarily method of communication is not accessible to an individual.

Sample Questions:

1. In instances where visual information is provided, is it provided in a format that is accessible to you? Alternatively, are there audio alternatives for the visual information provided?

2. Where speech is required for communication, are alternatives made available as needed?
3. In instances where motion or dexterity is needed for the use of ICT devices are accessible alternatives often made available for the use of those devices?
4. Have you encountered communication software or devices in public where your ability to use them was hindered by limited functionality or adjustments?

Indicator 5: Service navigation

How well a person is able to access information and navigate various services in the community, in business and in the public service will impact a person's ability to utilize needed services. The Province of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Plan explores the possibility of establishing a service navigator to help people with disabilities access information and services (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018). This indicator measures the ease with which individuals are able to navigate various services in their communities.

Sample Questions:

1. How well are you able to access information about services in your community?
2. Do you face barriers when trying to access information about services you are interested in or need?
 - a. health services
 - b. financial services
 - c. community services
 - d. social services
3. What types of barriers do you face in navigating services?
4. Has anyone assisted you in accessing information or navigating services in your community?
5. Is it easy to find information about accessible places and services?

Indicator 6: Time spent on accessing information

Given that people with disabilities may experience barriers to accessing information and given that service navigation is often complex when various departments or service areas may be involved, it is important to establish how much time is spent on accessing information in daily life. This indicator measures the extent to which people feel they spend an appropriate amount of time accessing information and navigating services.

Sample question:

1. Do you experience delays or wait times due to availability of information in accessible formats?

6. Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

According to Access by Design 2030 (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018), standards for public transportation and transportation infrastructure are important for enabling all Nova Scotians to travel more easily in urban and rural areas across the province. Transportation affects all areas of life, education, work, health, social, access to goods and services etc. Transportation includes bus, train, and air travel.

Indicator 1: Access to accessibility information and general service information

Public transportation agencies should make available to the public information about accessible transportation and accessibility features on transportation vehicles. Ease of access to information in this area helps individuals with disabilities easily find information on options that are available to them. Boarding and pre-boarding announcements, route information and stop indicators should also be available in various formats to ensure accessibility (audio and visual). The AODA (2012) offers similar guidelines in this area.

Sample Question

1. Is it easy to find information about accessible transportation options, services, and routes for public transportation in your area?
2. Is information about pre-boarding and boarding easy to access and understand?
3. Are announcements on public transit about stops, emergency information, and other relevant information offered in a format that is accessible to you? (announcements, information on screen)

Indicator 2: Physically accessible transportation

Modes of transportation should be physically accessible to individuals with a range of disabilities or impairments. This includes entrances to vehicles, seating and space for mobility devices. The AODA (2012) outlines a range of accessibility guidelines for public transportation that could help support developments in this area. This indicator measures whether individuals can physically access public transportation when and as needed.

Sample Questions:

1. Are you able to enter and exit public transportation in a safe and easy manner?
2. Is accessible seating available and clearly marked on public transportation vehicles in your community?
3. Are you able to access this seating if needed?
4. Is there adequate space for a mobility device if needed?

Indicator 3: Availability of public transportation

When individuals rely upon public transportation, availability of such transportation is important both in terms of location and time-of-day. Additionally, public transportation in rural areas may

be limited or may rely more upon community-based transportation services designed to meet the needs of rural Nova Scotians not on mainstream service routes. This indicator assesses whether people with disabilities have access to public transportation as and when needed. It also considers the needs of people with disabilities in rural Nova Scotia who may rely upon community-based transportation.

Sample Questions:

1. Do you have access to public transportation near your home?
2. How often are you able to get to places you need to go on public transportation?
3. Is public transportation available to you at days and times when you need it?
4. If you live in rural Nova Scotia, are there accessible community-based transportation options available to you?

Indicator 4: Service interruptions

Access to reliable accessible transportation can significantly impact daily life if a person relies upon public transportation for daily activities. Service interruptions can be expected due to maintenance and mechanical issues, holidays, weather, or unexpected events. If there are service interruptions, alternative accessible options should be made available and clearly communicated in a timely manner. The AODA (2012) outlines concerns in this area. This indicator measures the accessibility of information regarding service disruptions and the impact of this on people with disabilities who rely upon public transportation.

Sample Questions:

1. When there are service interruptions to public transportation, are accessible options communicated or offered to you?
2. Are accessible options provided in a timely manner?
3. Are the accessible options the same cost as a regular fare?

Indicator 5: Equitable fares

In line with the AODA (2012), fares for accessible transportation should not be higher than conventional fare rates in the same jurisdiction. Additionally, a support person who is accompanying a person with a disability should not be charged a fare so that persons with disabilities do not face any barriers to having their support person with them. This indicator identifies whether individuals are subject to additional fees due to their disability.

Sample Questions:

1. Is the fare for accessible transportation equivalent to a regularly priced fare?
2. If you have a support worker, is that person granted access to public transportation at no cost?

Indicator 6: Qualifying for and accessing accessible specialized transportation

Sometimes when accessible transportation is not possible on the standard routes of transportation, patrons must qualify for accessible transportation services and schedule use of this service separate from the mainstream mode of public transportation. Qualification for services and access to them should be equitable and easy to access. This indicator measures ease of access to accessible transportation and any barriers individuals may encounter.

Sample questions:

1. If you have requested accessible transportation, was the qualification process accessible and easy?
2. Is accessible transportation available in a timely manner?
3. Is the cost equivalent to standard transportation?

Indicator 7: Time spent accessing transportation and daily commutes

Recognizing that public transportation is not always accessible, people with disabilities may spend more time planning their daily commutes than people without disabilities. Accessible transportation options may not be available as and when needed. This indicator will measure time spent on planning for transportation and accessing it.

Sample Questions

1. Do you experience delays or long wait times due to the availability of accessible transportation options?
2. Do you spend more time than you would like planning how you will get to work, appointments, or other events in the community?

7. Community Vitality

Strong communities and community engagement are important for individual well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us the importance of socialization and connection to others. Resilient communities and our sense of belonging to community impact our quality of life. We need to understand the extent to which communities in Nova Scotia welcome and include people with disabilities. This domain measures sense of belonging to community; ability to live independently in the community; virtual access; community safety; access to volunteer activities; and time spent in community and with friends and/or family.

Indicator 1: sense of belonging to community

According to Engage Nova Scotia (2014), nearly two thirds of Nova Scotians feel a strong sense of belonging to their communities. Furthermore, being socially connected is important,

Community Vitality is important for everyone. Strong social connections provide valuable benefits for physical and mental health and are critical to community resiliency in an emergency. They have positive impacts across most domains including Healthy

Populations, Democratic Engagement, Education, Leisure and Culture, Living Standards and Time Use. (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014, p. 8)

A quarter of Nova Scotians have activity limitations that prevent them from participating as fully as they would like as active members of the community. Important here is to understand the extent to which people with disabilities feel like they belong to their communities, but also if they feel included and able to participate in community events (See also Indicator 2). Further still, do people with disabilities feel stigmatized by people in their community or do they feel a sense of equality during their social interactions?

Social inclusion is fundamental to feeling a sense of belonging. Social inclusion can mean interacting with community and friends, knowing where to go for help, meeting people outside of the home, and knowing people in your community (See Prescott Group, n.d.)

Sample Questions: (some questions adapted from Engage Nova Scotia, 2014 and from Prescott Group):

1. Do you regularly stop to talk to people in your neighborhood?
2. Are people in your community willing to help each other?
3. Are there opportunities to participate in community events and socialize with others?
4. Do you have friends you can talk to if you have a problem?
5. Do you see your friends when you want to?
6. Do you spend time with people who have the same interests as you?
7. Are community events accessible to you? If not, why?
 - a. Do you belong to a group or club in your community?
8. Are you able to easily travel to and from community events?
9. Do you travel to community events in any of the following ways:
 - a. in my own vehicle on my own
 - b. carpooling with others
 - c. public transit
 - d. accessible pre-booked transit services
 - e. taxi or ride-sharing service
 - f. other means (bike, wheelchair, scooter, walking)
10. Do you spend time each week on leisure activities in your community or with community members in your home?

Indicator 2: ability to live independently in the community

For people with disabilities, feeling included in one's community can be influenced by whether a person experiences barriers in their daily lives and in their communities. One's sense of belonging is only possible if an individual is able to live independently in a place of their choosing and with whomever they choose to live with. Article 19 of the CRPD (United Nations, 2008) outlines the right of persons with disabilities to independent living and being included in the community.

Sample Questions:

1. Do you live in a place of your own choosing? If not, why not

- a. lack of availability
 - b. long wait times
 - c. financial barriers
 - d. lack of transportation in preferred locations
2. Does your home meet all your accessibility needs?
3. Do you have access to supports that allow you to live independently? Which ones:
 - a. financial supports
 - b. personal support worker
 - c. custodial services
 - d. meals program
 - e. Built environment adaptations: visual cues for smoke detectors, ramps, accessible washrooms, adaptations for scent requirements)
4. Do you consider yourself housebound due to your disability? (the following questions are adapted from the Canadian Survey on Disability Statistics Canada, 2022)]
5. If you are housebound, what are the reasons?
 - a. you don't feel safe when you leave your home
 - b. your disability or health conditions fluctuates
 - c. your disability is aggravated when you go out
 - d. you have mobility restrictions
 - e. lack of accessible transportation or it is unreliable
 - f. person support person not available
 - g. no interest or motivation to go out
 - h. the places you want to go are not accessible
 - i. weather conditions or seasonal limitations.
6. Do you feel socially isolated?
7. Do you have friends or relatives that you feel close to?

Indicator 3: Virtual access

Sometimes people engage with their communities through virtual means. Online events are becoming increasingly common since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, people may engage with their communities through virtual means. This indicator identifies whether individuals with disabilities have equal virtual access to community events and activities.

Sample Questions:

1. Do you attend virtual community events? If not, why not?
 - a. lack of awareness about events
 - b. inadequate internet access
 - c. no access to technology
 - d. lack of knowledge on how to use technology to connect to the internet
2. How often do you attend online gatherings?
3. Does fee for service pose a barrier to having access to internet?
4. Is information to online events easy to find?
5. Can you safely access social media?

Indicator 4: Community safety

An essential indicator for a good quality of life is feeling safe. According to Engage Nova Scotia (2014), serious crime is down 58% since 1998 which is below the national average. Nova Scotians have a strong sense of trust in others and two thirds of Nova Scotians feel safe. People with disabilities experience higher rates of violence than those without. Women and girls with disabilities experience a higher rate of violence than either those without a disability or their male counterparts (Bernasky, 2022) Furthermore, According to Article 6 in the CRPD (United Nations, 2008):

1. States Parties recognize that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and in this regard shall take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement, and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the present Convention. (p. 7)

Another aspect of safety is what happens during an emergency. Measuring sense of safety in the community requires considering all these areas.

Sample Questions: (all but question 2, 8, 9, 11-12 taken from Engage Nova Scotia's survey)

1. If there was an emergency, would people in your community help you?
2. If you needed to leave your home, is there a safe accessible place in your community where you could go?
3. Do you feel safe when you leave your home?
4. Do you travel at night by yourself?
5. Do you feel safe travelling in your neighbourhood after dark?
6. How much do you trust strangers? Not at all, a little bit, very much
7. Do you trust the police?
8. How much do you trust police to interact with you in a way that accommodates your disability?
9. Do you trust that first responders would communicate effectively with you and meet your needs?
10. How much do you trust people you work with?
11. How much do you trust people you socialize with?
12. Have you ever felt unsafe due to a stranger confronting you/ questioning you about your disability?
13. Have you ever encountered an environmental barrier in your community that made you feel unsafe?

Indicator 5: Access to volunteer activities

Engage Nova Scotia also highlights the importance of volunteering to support community vitality, help with sustaining programs, and get people involved in their community. It has significant benefits for individuals as well.

Sample Questions:

1. Do you have access to opportunities to volunteer in your community?
2. Do you face any barriers to volunteering?
 - a. lack of awareness of about opportunities
 - b. I can not participate due to lack of accessible options to accommodate my disability.
 - c. I do not have access to transportation to get to volunteer sites

Indicator 6: Time spent in community and with friends and / or family

Engage Nova Scotia (2014) reports a decline across Canada in average time individuals spend with friends. Time-use is an important consideration for overall wellbeing, “Not only does the amount of time matter, but the pace of and relative control over timing of activities throughout the day can affect overall quality of life” (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014, p. 34). This indicator measures time spent with friends and/or family, in community, and engaging in volunteer and other activities. This will be important for understanding the extent to which people with disabilities feel they have sufficient time to engage with others as desired.

Sample Questions: (adapted from Engage Nova Scotia, 2014)

1. Do you feel you spend adequate time doing the following activities?
 - a. Socializing
 - b. Participating in community events
 - c. To form or sustain relationships
 - d. Volunteering
 - e. Nurturing your creative side
 - f. Engaging with your family

8. Democratic Engagement

Article 29 of the CRPD pertains to participation in political and public life. It states that, “States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others” (United Nations, 2008, p. 21). Historically, Nova Scotia saw regular increases in democratic engagement followed by decreases in more recent years. Voter turnout continued to rise up to 2015 when 70.5% of Nova Scotians voted in the federal election (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014). This domain should also include engagement in provincial and municipal elections and with government events such as town halls and other political events as desired.

Indicator 1: Engagement in federal, provincial and municipal elections

People with disabilities have a right to participate in elections at all levels of government on an equal basis with others. Understanding whether barriers exist to full and equal participation is important here.

Sample Questions:

1. Do you vote in federal elections?
2. Do you vote in provincial elections?
3. Do you vote in municipal elections?

The following questions should be asked for all three types of elections:

4. Do you have access to voting sites during elections?
 - a. if not, what are the reasons: environmental barriers, communication barriers, lack of transportation.
5. Do you have access to information about elections and political parties?
 - a. if not, what barriers exist? information in a format that is accessible to you, lack of access to technology, lack of access to media.

Indicator 2: Knowledge and investment in political issues

As highlighted by Engage Nova Scotia (2014) in their Quality-of-Life survey, whether or not people feel knowledgeable about political issues and qualified to participate in politics or to engage in issues facing their communities and regions is important.

Sample Questions: (questions 1-7 adapted from the PWD Spotlight)

1. How much do you trust the federal government?
2. How much do you trust the provincial government?
3. How much do you trust your municipal government?
4. Do you feel knowledgeable or qualified enough to participate in politics?
5. Do you feel you have a good understanding of issues facing our region?
6. Do you feel you have a say in what the government does?
7. Do you feel government officials care about what you have to say?
8. Do you feel the government understands issues affecting people with disabilities?
9. Do you feel the government makes efforts to address issues affecting people with disabilities?

9. Healthy Populations

Access by Design 2030 (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018) identified a need to develop a provincial accessibility standard for health care. The Health Populations Domain considers,

... the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of the population. It examines life expectancy, lifestyle and behaviours, and the circumstances that influence health such as access to health care. Healthy Populations captures both the overall health of the population

(“health status”) as well as factors that influence health (“health determinants”). This broad perspective is used because peoples’ lifestyles and behaviours are constrained and shaped by broader social factors such as how food is distributed and priced, how houses are constructed and located, how urban transportation is designed, how easily people can access health care and recreational services, and how we interact with the natural environment. (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014, p. 28)

More than ever, our health care systems are facing a crisis. The COVID 19 pandemic has put a strain on our health care system and access to services and timely medical care continues to be an critical issue facing all Canadians. The CRPD addresses rights to health for people with disabilities in two ways. Article 21 protects the right to privacy related to health and rehabilitation. Article 25 protects against discrimination in the area of health and prohibits the denial of care. In part it states that,

States Parties recognize that persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability... (United Nations, 2008, p.23)

Healthy populations go beyond the healthcare system to social determinants of health addressed throughout this Index. Many areas of our daily life impact our health and health outcomes. What we eat, physical activity, social interactions; each of these things impact our health. This set of indicators is concerned with understanding the extent to which people with disabilities have access to what they need to live a healthy life and how they rate their overall physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Indicator 1: Access to medical, specialist and physician services

With a growing number of Nova Scotians waiting for a family doctor, specialist, or other health care services, access is an urgent concern. Consistent, reliable, and timely health care access can impact health outcomes and by extension quality of life. Being mindful that medicalizing disability is not the intention here, physician care is just as important for people with disabilities as those without. Some people with disabilities, though, do have medical issues that can be compounded by access to health care and other supports, perceptions of medical professionals, and availability of appropriate accommodations within the health care system. This indicator measures how people with disabilities access care, and their experiences within the health care system.

Sample Questions:

1. Do you have a family doctor?
2. Do you have timely access to your health care provider or specialist services?
3. Are you able to access diagnostic services such as blood work in a timely manner?
4. Are you able to access specialist services in a timely manner?
5. Do you have access to rehabilitation services when needed?
6. Do you have access to mental health professionals if needed?
7. Have you experienced any barriers in terms of behaviours, misconceptions or assumptions made about you from a medical or health care professional because of your disability/ condition?

8. Have you experienced any barriers communicating in person with a medical or health care professional due to your disability/condition?
9. Have you experienced any barriers communicating by voice over the phone to a medical or health care professional due to your disability/condition?
10. Have you experienced any barriers with booking online medical appointments or services? (questions 7-10 adapted from the Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022))

Indicator 2: Access to medication

Access to medication as and when needed is important to maintaining good health. Because pharmacare is, for the most part, a privately funded service in Nova Scotia, the level of coverage for medication can vary among people with disabilities depending upon which services and supports they have access to. This indicator measures the impact that appropriate access to medication has on a person's quality of life.

Sample Questions:(questions 1-3 adapted from the Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022))

1. In the past twelve months, have you been unable to get access to medication you needed because of cost?
2. In the past 12 months, did you ever take prescription medication less often than you were supposed to because of the cost?
3. Thinking of all the prescription medications you have taken in the past 12 months, did you have any expenses for prescription medications, for which you will not be reimbursed?
4. In the past twelve months, have you been unable to get access to medication because of difficulty getting a prescription filled?
5. Has inadequate access to medications impacted your physical or mental health?
6. Has inadequate access to medication impacted your ability to do daily tasks?

Indicator 3: Access to therapies and services

An important part of health care are the therapies and services we receive in addition to routine health care services. Here we want to know if people with disabilities require and receive access to these services.

1. Sample Question
2. During the past 12 months, did you require and receive any therapies or services on a regular basis because of your condition? (i.e.: Physiotherapy, speech therapy, counselling services, addiction services, life skills programs, acupuncture etc. (adapted from Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022), see for full list)
3. Did you receive the therapies and services you needed?
4. Why didn't you receive more of the therapies or services that you needed? Cost (e.g., too expensive, no or limited insurance), no longer available, prevented by health condition, transportation not available, office hours not convenient, other reason (Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022))

5. Do you feel your health outcomes have been negatively impacted by lack of access to these services?

Indicator 4: Access to emergency services

With the growing wait lists for primary care physicians and extended closures of emergency departments across the province, access to emergency services is a concern for all Nova Scotians. People with disabilities may experience additional attitudinal and environmental barriers related to their condition when they seek emergency medical care which needs to be considered here. This indicator also measures if people with disabilities get access to emergency services on an equal basis with others. This includes whether or not they are seen by a medical professional when they visit an emergency department, if they have access to accommodations during health emergencies (sign language interpretation, for example), and if there are potential barriers to being seen by first responders during a health emergency.

Sample Questions:

1. Have you had a medical emergency in the last year where you interacted with emergency responders or health care professionals?
2. If you had a medical emergency, did you experience any barriers to communicating during the incident due to your disability?
3. Do you feel the emergency responders/medical staff took your concerns seriously?
4. Do you feel you did not receive the care you needed due to your condition/disability?

Indicator 5: Access to quality food

Food security is a concern for many Nova Scotians, particularly for households relying on government benefits (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014). Given the high correlation between poverty and disability, access to good quality food is especially concerning for people with disabilities. Yet, we know that diet impacts a person's health and quality of life. This indicator measures whether individuals have access to quality food and if they are informed on health eating habits.

Sample Questions:(Questions 1-5 taken from the Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022). See Prescott Group (n.d.) for a list of questions related to physical wellbeing and eating habits):

1. The food that [you/you and other household members] bought just didn't last, and there wasn't any money to get more • 1: Often true • 2: Sometimes true • 3: Never true
2. [You/You and other household members] couldn't afford to eat balanced meals • 1: Often true • 2: Sometimes true • 3: Never true
3. In the past 12 months, did [you/you or other adults in your household] ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food? • 1: Yes • 2: No
4. In the past 12 months, did you personally ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food? • 1: Yes • 2: No
5. In the past 12 months, were you personally ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food? • 1: Yes • 2: No

6. I know which foods are healthy for me

Indicator 6: Physical activity, recreation, and fitness

According to Engage Nova Scotia (2014), "... 1 in 4 Nova Scotians have health or activity-based limitations that mean they cannot get around as easily or participate as fully as they would like to be active members of society" (p. 13). This indicator measures the extent to which people with disabilities feel they are able to achieve the level of activity they desire and what impact this has on their overall quality of life. Engage Nova Scotia (2014) also identified that activity rates among Nova Scotians have increased over time. Important here will be whether people with disabilities have the same experiences.

Sample Questions: [questions 3-4 adapted from Prescott Group, (n.d.)]

1. Do you have access to recreation, fitness, or other physical activities you wish to participate in?
 - a. If not, what barriers have you faced? environmental, awareness, financial, communication, attitudinal, activity limitations.
2. Do you feel your health has been negatively impacted because you have not been able to participate in physical, recreation, or fitness activities?
3. Do you often take part in fitness activities?
4. Have you been to a sports centre this year?

Indicator 7: Physical and mental health status

Over time, fewer Nova Scotians have reported very good or excellent overall health (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014). Measuring how people feel about their health status in an important indicator of healthy populations. The Canadian Survey on Disability defines health as, "not only the absence of disease or injury but also physical, mental and social well-being" (Statistics Canada, 2022, p. 88-89).

Sample questions: (questions 3-4 adapted from Prescott Group (n.d.), See their full list of physical and emotional wellbeing questions)

1. How would you rate your physical health? fair, good, very good, excellent
2. How would you rate your mental health? fair, good, very good, excellent
3. Do you have the energy to do what you want?
4. Do you have strategies to manage your stress?

Indicator 8: Impact of COVID 19

The impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic are not yet fully understood, but we know that it has had a disproportionate impact on marginalized groups. A specific indicator on the impact of COVID-19 is important because of the potential long-term implications of the pandemic. This indicator will help set a baseline for understanding its impact on the quality of life for people with

disabilities. Following the Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022), sample questions are as follows:

1. Which of the following best describes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your ability to meet financial obligations such as rent or mortgage payments, utilities and groceries? • 1: Major impact • 2: Moderate impact • 3: Minor impact • 4: No impact • 5: Too soon to tell
2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, did you lose your job, become laid off or have reduced work hours? • 1: Yes • 2: No • 3: Not applicable
3. Have you ever tested positive for COVID-19? • 1: Yes • 2: No
4. Have you ever been vaccinated against COVID-19? • 1: Yes • 2: No

Indicator 9: Time spent on health-related activities

Time spent on accessing medical care and services as well as time spent on fitness and health-related activities and routines is an important consideration. This indicator measures time spent on different activities that contribute to overall health and wellbeing. It also explores whether or not people with disabilities are spending more time than those without accessing medical services and treatments and if they have time to engage in fitness and physical activity as they desire.

Sample Questions:(questions 2-3 adapted from Engage Nova Scotia, 2014)

1. Does the time you spend attending medical appointments interfere with other aspects of your daily life?
2. Do you have adequate time for fitness activities?
3. Do you have adequate time to prepare and/or eat health meals?

10. Justice

For many people with disabilities, access to justice is hindered by disability-related barriers. Confidence in the justice system and police has been captured in the first Quality of Life survey conducted by Engage Nova Scotia (2014) under the Community Vitality domain. Given the finding of systemic discrimination against people with disabilities found by the Nova Scotia Court of Appeals in 2021 (*Disability Rights Coalition v. Nova Scotia (Attorney General)*, 2021), indicators in the area of justice are needed to measure the extent to which people with disabilities feel supported by the justice system and the people serving within it as well as the extent to which their quality of life is impacted by access or lack thereof. The CRPD (United Nations, 2008), under Article 4.1 - General Obligations outlines the following commitment:

(i) To promote the training of professionals and staff working with persons with disabilities in the rights recognized in the present Convention so as to better provide the assistance and services guaranteed by those rights. (p. 6)

Furthermore, Article 13 of the CRPD addresses Access to justice

1. States Parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, in order to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages.
2. In order to help to ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities, States Parties shall promote appropriate training for those working in the field of administration of justice, including police and prison staff. (United Nations, 2008, p. 11)

Indicator 1: Awareness of rights and legal options

People with disabilities have equal rights to representation and to made aware of their legal options and rights. The world over people with disabilities have not accessed the justice system when they need it because they are not aware of their rights or the possibilities to act (Bernasky, 2022). All people with disabilities need to be aware of their rights whether they are seeking justice or brought before the justice system. This indicator measures awareness of rights and options for addressing or upholding those rights among Nova Scotians with disabilities.

Sample Questions

1. Do you feel you have a good understanding of times when you were discriminated against due to your disability?
2. Do you know what your rights are as a person with a disability?
3. Do you know what your options are if your rights have been violated?
4. Have you been made aware of your rights in a manner that is accessible to you while interacting with the justice system?

Indicator 2: Access to the justice system

At one time or another people may need to access the justice system whether it is to achieve their rights or because they require legal protection or representation. The CRPD (United Nations, 2008), identifies specific provisions noted below:

Article 13 - Access to justice

1. States Parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, in order to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages.
2. In order to help to ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities, States Parties shall promote appropriate training for those working in the field of administration of justice, including police and prison staff. (p. 11)

For this indicator access to police, legal council, the court system, and correctional facilities will be measured.

Sample Questions:

1. Have you required access to police, legal counsel, or the court system?
2. Have you experienced barriers to access?
 - a. If so, which barriers did you experience? built environment barriers, transportation barriers, communication barriers, information barriers, attitudinal barriers, financial barriers?

Indicator 3: Trust in the justice system

Related to access is the extent to which a person feels confident in the justice system and the people serving within it. This indicator measures the level of trust an individual has in the system but also how those feelings of trust have impacted a person's interaction with the system.

Sample Questions:(Questions 1 and 2 taken from PWD Spotlight (Engage Nova Scotia, n.d.))

1. How much confidence do you have in the police?
2. How much confidence do you have in the justice system and courts?
3. Has your lack of trust in the police prevented you from seeking their assistance when needed?
4. Have you felt less safe because of your lack of trust in the police?
5. Has your lack of trust in the justice system or courts prevented you from pursuing legal action for something you felt required it?
6. Have you felt less safe because of this?

Indicator 4: Effective navigation of the justice system

Access to justice include the ability to effectively navigate the justice system including the services, supports and available options. This indicator measures experiences of people with disabilities navigating the justice system in Nova Scotia. This includes people seeking remedy through the justice system as well as people brought before police and courts, and those incarcerated.

Sample Questions

1. Have you interacted with any of the following services without access the appropriate accommodations? Police services, legal counsel, the court system; a correctional institution?
2. Have you ever refrained from accessing the justice system because you did not know how to access the services you needed when you needed them?
3. Have you ever attempted to access the legal services or protections but stopped because the process was overwhelming or too difficult to navigate?

11. Leisure and Culture

Since 2001, Nova Scotia's Leisure and Culture domain has been more resilient than the rest of Canada. However, performance in this area has declined and less money is being spent on leisure and cultural activities than in previous years (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014). The leisure and culture domain includes any activity that is undertaken outside of daily responsibilities to self, family, and work. These are the activities we undertake for enjoyment and relaxation. This can include physical activity, parks, live events, and vacations. This domain also includes arts and cultural activities. Of note is that it is still unclear how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted this domain.

For people with disabilities, their access to leisure and culture may be impacted by disability related barriers. It is important to capture the extent to which people with disabilities are engaging in leisure and cultural activities as compared to those without, but also to understand what barriers, if any, they are facing. Article 30 of the CRPD addresses the right to participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (United Nations, 2008). The Article identifies the right to participate on an equal basis with others outlining the need for accessible formats for materials as well as cultural and linguistic rights including Deaf culture and language. In part, the following indicators are designed to measure these objectives.

Indicator 1: Accessibility of activities and events

Regarding the accessibility of cultural activities, events and services, Article 30.1 of the CRPD calls upon states to ensure that people with disabilities,

(a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats; (b) Enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre, and other cultural activities, in accessible formats; (c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance. (United Nations, 2008, p. 22)

To this end, appropriate built environment and communication measures should be taken within our communities to ensure that cultural materials are accessible. Objective indicators regarding built environment and communication standards are measured, in large part, under other domains. This indicator measures whether people encounter barriers to leisure and culture and how it makes them feel.

Sample Questions: (Adapted from Engage Nova Scotia's (2014) Quality of Life Index)

1. Have you been unable to attend a leisure or cultural event due to a disability related barrier?
2. Do you refrain from attending events due to lack of information on accessibility at those events?

Indicator 2: Participation in and attendance at activities and events

Related to Indicator 1 is the extent to which individuals participate in various cultural and leisure activities and events. The CRPD also outlines these rights in Article 30.2. In part, this section calls upon states,

(a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels; (b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources; (c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues; (d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system; (e) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities. (United Nations, 2008, p. 24)

In support of this and following Engage Nova Scotia's (2014) Quality of Life Index these activities include sports, recreation, fitness, cultural events, hobbies and socializing with friends.

Sample Questions: (Question 1 and 2 Adapted from Engage Nova Scotia's (2014) Quality of Life Index)

1. Do you participate in any of the following activities?
 - a. Team sports, individual sports, exercise, socializing with friends, attending movies, restaurants/bars, playing board or card games at home, puzzles, hobbies and crafts, socializing online, online games, participating in cultural or arts events, playing musical instruments, watching TV/Movies at home.

(ask yes, no, not interested)
2. Do you attend any of the following activities?
 - a. Sports events, musical concerts, galleries/museums, festivals, dance, theatre
3. If you did not participate or attend events that you are interested in, what were the reasons why?
 - a. environmental barriers (side walks, curb cuts, lack of ramps, inaccessible entrances, signage, walkways)
 - b. transportation barriers
 - c. communication barriers
 - d. information barriers
 - e. attitudinal barriers
 - f. financial barriers

Indicator 3: Time spent on activities and events

Going beyond the right to access various activities, the amount of time people spend on various activities they are interested in is also important. This indicator measures how much time individuals spend time on leisure and cultural activities they are interested in. Rather than objectively measure the amount of time individuals spend on each type of activity, this indicator measures collective time spent on different types of activities an individual enjoys or is interested in.

Sample Questions:

1. Indicate which of the following activities that interest you and the amount of time you spend on these types of activity:
 - a. Team sports, individual sports, exercise, socializing with friends, attending movies, restaurants/bars, playing board or card games at home, puzzles, hobbies, and crafts, socializing online, online games, participating in cultural or arts events, playing musical instruments, watching TV/Movies at home.
2. Indicate which of the following events you are interested in attending and the amount of time you spent on them?
 - a. Sports events, musical concerts, galleries/museums, festivals, dance, theatre

(for each activity in 1 and 2 give the following options: never, sometimes, regularly, Frequently, Not Applicable)

Indicator 4: Volunteering

Volunteering can contribute to feelings of wellbeing and a sense of belonging in the community. Trends show that over time, Nova Scotians are spending less time volunteering with cultural and recreational organizations with 2010 data showing 28.2% in 2010 (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014). Access to opportunities for volunteering are just as important for persons with disabilities as it is to those without. This indicator measures whether people with disabilities have access and the ability to volunteer with activities and organizations they are interested in. (This is separate from Indicator 5 in section 7)

1. Sample questions:
 1. Do you have access to opportunities to volunteer with organizations or activities you are interested in? Yes. No.
 2. IF you do not have access to volunteer opportunities, what barriers do you face?
 - a. environmental barriers (side walks, curb cuts, lack of ramps, inaccessible entrances, signage, walkways)
 - b. transportation barriers
 - c. communication barriers
 - d. information barriers
 - e. attitudinal barriers
 - f. financial barriers

12. The Natural Environment

According to Engage Nova Scotia (2014) “environmental protection involves the prevention of waste and damage while revitalizing our ecosystems and working towards the sustainability of all our resources” (p. 46) Environmental sustainability is becoming a growing concern as we experience more frequent weather events that impact our daily lives in Nova Scotia, across Canada, and around the world. Opportunities to contribute to environmental sustainability as well as the impact of weather events on people with disabilities needs to be carefully considered here.

Indicator 1: Quality of the natural environment

Just like anyone else, a clean natural environment and good air quality are important to quality of life for persons with disabilities. This indicator objectively measures air quality and clean natural environments.

Sample Questions:(taken from Engage Nova Scotia's PWD Spotlight 2014 except for 2a and 6a)

1. The quality of the natural environment in the community where I live is very high.
2. There are plenty of opportunities to enjoy nature in the community where I live.
 - a. Do you face any barriers to enjoying nature in your community?
3. The air quality in my community is very good.
4. The water quality in my community is very good.
5. I feel I have a personal responsibility to help protect the natural environment.
6. I regularly participate in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment.
 - a. Do you encounter barriers to attending events?

Indicator 2: Access to opportunities to contribute to environmental sustainability

Building on Engage Nova Scotia's (2014) Quality of Life Index questions pertaining to the natural environment, this indicator addresses barriers that people with disabilities face in their efforts to reduce waste, recycle products, conserve energy, buy local products and choose transportation options that are climate change friendly.

Sample Questions:(questions 1,2,4, 7, 8, 10 adapted from Engage Nova Scotia's (2014) Quality of Life index)

1. How often in the last year were you able to reuse materials?
2. How often do you recycle materials?
3. Do you encounter and barriers to recycling materials?
4. How often do you conserve energy?
5. Do you face barriers to conserving energy?
6. How often do you have accessible public transportation options?
7. How often do you have access to an accessible ride sharing option?
8. How often are you able to walk, bike or use your mobility device rather than a car?
9. Does the built environment ever limit you in choosing more environmentally friendly options?
10. How often do you purchase food produced locally?
11. Do you face any barriers to purchasing locally produced food?

Indicator 3: Safety during weather events

As the frequency of weather events such as floods, fires, hurricanes, and winter storms increases risks to safety and wellbeing due to unsafe environments, evacuation orders and power failures are very real concerns for everyone. For people with disabilities, lack of awareness in the community and among first responders about accessible emergency procedures presents an

increased risk to safety and wellbeing. An indicator in this area is vital going forward to fully understand the impact of weather events and emergencies on people with disabilities and the barriers they experience in establishing their safety before, during, and after such events.

Sample Questions:

1. Before a weather emergency, would you have access to information about the emergency in an accessible formation?
2. If there was a future weather emergency, would you know how to access information about the weather event?
3. Do you feel prepared to evacuate your home in the event of a weather emergency?
4. Do you feel community members would be ready and able to assist you in the event of a weather emergency?
5. Do you have any barriers to feeling prepared to respond to a weather emergency? If so, which ones? community awareness, built environment, communication, lack of available information, financial barriers.
6. Do you have medical or mobility equipment that requires a power source to operate?
 - a. If yes, do you have access to a backup power supply in the event of a power failure?

13. Economic and Social Security

One of the strongest social determinants of health, and by extension well-being, is income and income security. Income and income supports are a requirement to meet basic needs, but they also impact health and health outcomes, housing security, access to education, transportation options, socialization decisions and all areas of life which impact our quality of life. As highlighted by Engage Nova Scotia (2014) in measuring Living Standards through their Quality-of-Life Index,

“Overall strength in this domain has an important relationship with virtually all domains of the Index... A solid, predictable income makes it easier to access education, leisure and cultural opportunities, good food and housing. Income and secure employment are important determinants of physical and mental health, and financial freedom allows people to participate more fully in democratic and social life of the community” (p.10).

Nova Scotians also spend more of their net income to meet their daily needs than any other province (Engage Nova Scotia, 2014), recognizing that we do not yet know the extent to which COVID-19 has changed the landscape for meeting basic needs.

Article 28 of the CRPD outlines Adequate standard of living and social protection. In part it states that:

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of

this right without discrimination on the basis of disability. (United Nations, 2008, p. 20)

Given the high rates of poverty among persons with disabilities, and the bi-directional link between poverty and disability, economic security is one of the most important areas to consider in measuring well-being and quality of life for people with disabilities just as it is for those without disabilities. Without success in this area, all other areas of life are affected. The impact of economic security is measured throughout this document particularly when measuring denial to access of services, supports, equipment, events, and locations due to financial barriers. The following indicators identify additional measures needed in this area. Food security, employment, and accessible housing are not included here because they are covered in sections 7, 3 and 2 respectively)

Indicator 1: Income or income supports

Income supports for persons with disabilities are low across the country. COVID-19 has exacerbated income inequality for multiply marginalized groups, but data on income security for people with disabilities in Nova Scotia is limited. This indicator is vital to understanding the needs of people with disabilities in attaining a standard of living that supports the quality of their daily lives. This is especially important as the federal government moves towards establishing a basic income for people with disabilities. The Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022) identified income sources that should be replicated for questions in this area.

Sample Questions:(Question 1 - 3 adapted from the Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022)):

1. Did you receive income from any of the following sources for the previous year?
 - a. Employment (Include wages, salaries, commissions, and tips.)
 - b. Self-employment (Include wages, salaries, commissions, and tips.)
 - c. Workers' Compensation
 - d. Employment Insurance or Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (Exclude Short-term disability sickness benefit.)
 - e. Pension plan benefits (Exclude disability benefits.)
 - f. Social assistance or welfare (Exclude disability benefits or income from provincial or territorial programs such as DSP, etc.)
 - g. Disability Benefits (Include income from federal, provincial or territorial programs such as Disability benefits from Canada Pension Plan, Quebec Pension Plan or Veterans Affairs, ODSP, DSP, AISH, PPMB, etc. as well as private benefits or programs.)
 - h. 08: Federal or provincial COVID-19 emergency benefits
 - i. Other sources (e.g., other government income, child tax benefit, child support, education allowances and scholarships, Northern Allowance, spousal support, honoraria)

- j. No personal income source.
2. Which of the following pension plan benefits did you receive?
 - a. Canada Pension Plan (CPP)
 - b. Quebec Pension Plan (QPP)
 - c. Old Age Security (OAS) or Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)
 - d. Provincial or Territorial pension plan
 - e. Private or employment related pension plan
 - f. Other retirement pensions and annuities
 3. Which of the following disability plan benefits did you receive?
 - a. Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D) benefits
 - b. Quebec Pension Plan Disability benefits
 - c. Employment Insurance short-term disability sickness benefit (Include Quebec Parental Insurance (QPIP) disability benefits)
 - d. Provincial or territorial disability programs (e.g., ODSP, DSP, AISH, PPMB)
 - e. Private or employment related disability insurance plan
 - f. Motor vehicle accident insurance disability
 - g. Veterans Affairs Disability benefits
 - h. Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)
 - i. Other disability plan benefits
 4. Were you able to meet the following needs with the income stated above:
 - a. housing
 - b. food
 - c. utilities (electricity, water)
 - d. communication (phone, internet)
 - e. medical needs (medication, supplies, therapies)
 - f. transportation
 - g. educational needs
 - h. recreational / social needs

Indicator 2: Access to disability supports and programs

A key element of economic and social security for many people with disabilities is timely access to disability supports and services. This includes effective support with navigating support systems and programs to ensure that people get access to what they need when they need it. This includes in-take procedures, eligibility requirements, referral processes, and navigating overlapping services. This indicator can help support monitoring of progress on the human rights remedy.

Sample Questions:

1. Have you accessed disability supports through the Nova Scotia Disability Support Program?
 - a. If yes, did you have support in the following areas:
 - i. Application procedures
 - ii. Understanding eligibility requirements,

- iii. Getting referrals into or out of the program
- iv. Understanding how these supports affect other types of supports you were accessing
- b. Did you have to wait to obtain supports?
- c. Were you denied access due to failure to meet eligibility requirements?
- d. Did the supports you received meet your needs?

Indicator 3: Affordable, accessible housing and living independently in the community

Access to affordable housing is a growing concern across Canada and Nova Scotia as the cost of living increases along with housing costs. We are facing a housing crisis and for people with disabilities affordable and accessible housing is becoming increasingly difficult to find and maintain. Living independently is also a concern for people with disabilities who may need access to attendant care or other supports to live independently in the community (Independent living is outlined in Section 7, Indicator 2). This indicator measures whether people with disabilities have access to affordable and accessible housing as well as the supports in place to allow them to live independently if needed. The Canadian Survey on Disability (Statistics Canada, 2022) asks if a person has ever experienced homelessness where they have been without a secure and stable place to live and so data on this has been collected. This indicator identifies housing concerns in Nova Scotia, the causes of homelessness, as well as accessible housing (recognizing that Section 2, Indicator 3 measures accessible housing).

Another aspect of accessible and affordable housing is the effective navigation of supports in the community to allow for independent living. This can include having a support person in the community to help with any transitions and new navigations that might result from being impacted by de-institutionalization commitments made by the Government of Nova Scotia and a result of the *Human Rights Review and Remedy for the Findings of Systemic Discrimination against Nova Scotians with Disabilities* (Bartnik & Stainton, 2023).

Additionally, this indicator can help measure progress with the Human Rights Remedy (Bartnik & Stainton, 2023), specifically that there are emergency response providers in place to ensure that people are not re-institutionalized as a matter of last resort, instead ensuring people have a home of their choosing within the community.

Sample Questions

1. Do you have a stable long-term place of your choosing to live?
 - a. If not, why not? (cost, accessibility, availability)
2. Does your current income/income supports cover your housing costs? Yes, No
3. Have you ever had to go without food, electricity, heat or other basic necessities because of your housing costs?
4. Does your current housing meet your accessibility needs?

5. Were you ever denied access to housing due to your accessibility needs or disability?
6. Do you have supports in place to help you live independently in your home?
7. Have you been involved in moving from an Institution to a home in the community in the last year?
 - a. If yes, have you had support with making decisions about things in your life that have previously been decided for you by institution staff?
 - b. Have you had support with accessing programs and services in the community that are new to you since your transition out of institutional living

Indicator 4: Ability to save for the future

When meeting basic needs is a daily concern and access to employment and supports is not always adequate, our ability to plan for the future and work towards an economically secure future is threatened. Despite the existence of government incentives such as the Registered Disability Savings Plan, many people with disabilities do not know about these incentives, have trouble qualifying for them, or simply do not have income to contribute to these plans. This indicator measures the extent to which people with disabilities are able to save for their futures.

Sample Questions:

1. Do you have money set aside in a savings account for the future?
2. Do you have any investment plans (RRSP, TFSA etc.)
3. Do you have a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)
 - a. If not, what is the reason? (not aware of it, did not qualify for it, no income to contribute to it).
4. If you encountered an unexpected life event, do you have enough savings to support you through this time?

Conclusion

This Quality-of-Life Index for People with Disabilities includes 76 Indicators across 13 Domains and is designed to encourage data collection on the quality of life of people with disabilities in Nova Scotia. It is also intended to help measure progress on the implementation of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act. As the first of its kind in Nova Scotia, the Index is the result of extensive document review as well as collaboration and consultation with stakeholders ranging from community organizations to people with diverse experiences of disability and first voice. This first Quality of Life Index for Persons with a Disability is a representation of a collective commitment to protecting and promoting the rights and inclusion of diverse people with disabilities in Nova Scotia now and into the future.

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