# Step 3: Embedding disability into the policy issue

In this step, you will consider in more detail how disability is relevant to your policy. You may have already started doing this in Step 1 and can now take a deeper dive into exploring the impacts.

## What groups of disabled people, or parts of the disability sector, may be affected by the policy problem?

You’ll need to collect some information about who is affected by the policy problem.

We know that it can be hard to find information about disabled people, because methods of collecting data on disability status are still being developed.

### Measuring disability

Statistics NZ (Stats NZ) does not have a statistical standard for disability status but endorses the use of the [Washington Group Short Set questions](http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/washington-group-question-sets/short-set-of-disability-questions/)to assign disability status in large scale surveys that are not disability-specific. International jurisdictions do not have a common method of collecting disability-related data.

The Disability Data and Evidence Working Group (DDEWG) [are working on developing guidance on how to collect disability related data](https://www.odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/improving-information-about-disabled-people/).

In the meantime, the Public Service Commission have issued [guidance on measuring disability in the state sector workforce](https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/resources/enabling-ability/?e182=1306-appendix-one-collecting-disability-information).

You can access some data about disabled people from the following sources:

* 2013 Disability Survey
* NZ General Social Survey
* NZ Health Survey
* Household Economic Survey
* Household Labour Force Survey
* NZ Crime and Victims Survey

If the data you need is missing, note it down for action later, e.g. organising future collection by your agency or by others.

If you have data gaps, see if there is any related data or international data that you can use as a proxy measure.

## With respect to your policy problem, how might disabled people have different needs or expectations?

Discrimination against disabled people is historically grounded and continues to exist in New Zealand society across multiple levels. Consider the data in the Disability Data Indicators Dashboard.

The information in the dashboard shows that many disabled people experience many inequalities in their access to, and outcomes across, various aspects of life, including but not limited to: work, money, security, education, the built environment, community, health and wellbeing.

These might differ at various stages of people’s lives. Many disabled people will have reduced income, fewer opportunities to maintain employment and fewer options to switch roles. As a result, while New Zealand Superannuation offers a universal pension, disabled people tend to have less net wealth at retirement than non-disabled people. You can read more in the [CCS Disability Action report: The State of Wellbeing and Equality](https://ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/assets/resource-files/The-State-of-wellbeing-and-equality-FINAL-ONLINE.pdf).

Consider how these inequalities might play out with respect to your policy problem.

## Shifts in thinking about disability

Thoughts about disability have evolved over time. It is now accepted that disabled people have the same rights as non-disabled people.

Yet disabled people continue to face barriers to participating in and contributing to their communities that non-disabled people do not.

Make sure your policy work continues to reinforce the shifts in thinking about disability, as shown in the table below.

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| --- | --- |
| **Shifts in thinking about disability** | |
| **From:** | **To:** |
| Disability is an individual problem | Disability is a problem resulting from barriers in society |
| Differences in abilities are inadequacies | Differences in abilities are assets |
| Seeing deficits | Seeing strengths |
| Us and them: Exclusion and intolerance | All of us: Inclusion and valuing |
| Society choosing for 'them' | Disabled people choosing for themselves |
| Professionals know best | Recognising disabled people as experts in their own lives |
| Charity based | Rights based |
| 'Patient' | Citizen |
| Institutional orientated | Community orientated |
| Medical model of disability - control or cure | Social model of disability - change environment and attitudes |
| Too expensive to support | An investment and wellbeing approach to funding |
| Government-decided supports | [Enabling Good Lives principles](https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/) |
| Eurowestern policy | Inclusion of a Te Ao perspective |

## How might disabled people have different expectations or priorities about what needs to happen?

What has triggered an examination of the problem? Is this problem important to a particular group of people or sector? Who has identified it? Whose voice is most prominent? Consider whether disabled people’s voices have been heard in relation to this problem. Have the experiences of disabled people been considered in defining the issue, from their perspective? Think about how you should engage with disabled people. This is covered more in [Step 4](https://www.odi.govt.nz/disability-toolkit/engaging-with-the-disability-community/?stage=Stage).

## In summary, make sure your policy problem is framed to ensure that disability issues are considered throughout the process

Given the information you have found out from and about disabled people, how can you frame the goals of your policy project to ensure the issues for disabled people will be addressed in the process?

Remember, it does not follow that disabled people will benefit simply because they are present in the target population. A different or more specialised approach may be required. Consider applying the universal design approach which is good design that works for everyone rather than just the perceived ‘norm’. It is more efficient and cost effective to incorporate universal design principles from the start, than make changes retrospectively.  For more information on Universal design, see [things you should know. definitions, concepts and approaches](https://www.odi.govt.nz/disability-toolkit/things-you-should-know-definitions-concepts-and-approaches/?stage=Stage).