Creative Conversations
# for Responsible Innovation:
On Diversity

People working in research are different and diverse in myriad ways, including but not limited to age, gender, race, sexuality, nationality, research discipline and career stage.

Many of these characteristics have a relationship to the power individuals have, and both privilege and discrimination can be intersectional.

Talking about diversity can be uncomfortable – it can expose how many or how few privileges we have and how we compare to others; it can challenge how we see our accomplishments and behaviours; and it can expose differences between how people perceive the world to be now, how they want it to be in the future, and how they think we should get there. Yet thinking about, talking about, and reflecting upon the importance and value of diversity and difference in a research environment and wider society is an essential component of Responsible Innovation. This toolkit provides a selection of activities that enable people to do this, to reflect on what they can do to lessen the effects of unequal privileges, and to identify the benefits of collaborating with people who think differently and who have had different experiences and disciplinary backgrounds.

For these activities to be most effective, we recommend facilitators institute a co-designed Learner's Contract with the group. This should include an agreement that participants will respect the confidentiality of the group; can opt out at any point; and shouldn't share anything they aren't comfortable with. Participants should also recognise that the issues covered in this toolkit are the focus of a rapidly evolving international conversation, the most socially acceptable terminology and ideas are changing and are not universal to all places and cultures, and the group may contain people who are not speaking in their first language. They should assume everyone is acting in good faith and attempting to communicate their thoughts as best they can; and use differences in understanding as points for discussion rather than a cause of offense or conflict.
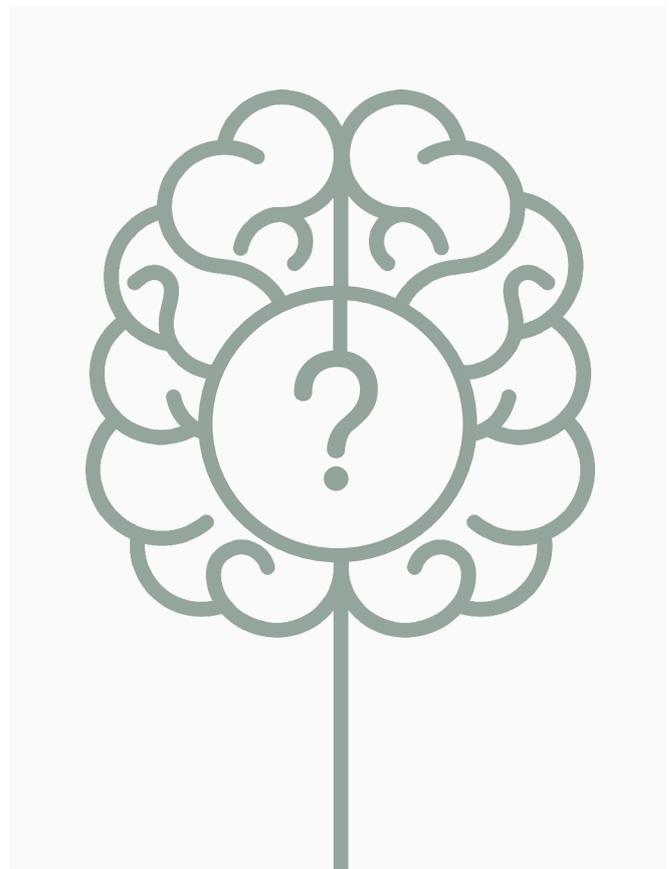
# Why do you think consideration of gender and diversity is essential to good research practice?

" It is not just "good" research practice to include sex, gender and diversity in research design - it is increasingly seen as "research excellence". It is crucial to consider both social and biological categories of difference to help make better science and to improve the quality of new knowledge.

Do we want science to be relevant to our communities and society? If so, we need to be concerned about how our science has a differentiated impact on biological sexes, women, men, girls, boys, and non-binary people, and how other categories of social difference intersect. We should be mindful of these issues at all stages of the research cycle: from the identification of a research problem, study design, collection, and analysis methods, to dissemination and public engagement.

This is not easy, especially if researchers do not feel comfortable, adequately trained, or knowledgeable about these aspects. One of the best ways to consider sex, gender and diversity in research is to bring together diverse experts who can work collaboratively. This community of a specific discipline experts and sex, gender and diversity experts can mutually learn from each other and integrate their knowledge into research to make excellent science."

Dr Ola Thomson, Research Associate in EDI, Elizabeth Blackwell Institute, University of Bristol
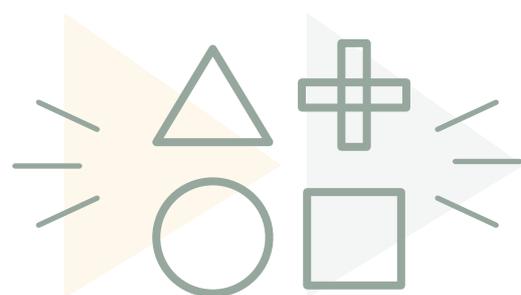
Eye opening tasks

10 Mins or Less

Participants: 2+

Facilitated: Yes

Online: Yes

In the Room: Yes

- **Activity type:** Check – activities that will help self-assess their opinions or beliefs
- **Purpose:** To get participants to pay attention to very common situations and realise the power dynamics in place. The observations from the participants are the starting point for a discussion.
- **Materials:** None

Instructions

Share these tasks with the group ahead of the training session. Ask participants to undertake one or more of them beforehand and be prepared to share their observations/reflections during the session.

1. Think about which terms are gendered in your language and contribute to gender stereotypes. For example, in English, gendered terms include referring to a mixed group of people as "guys" or calling women "dear". You might also observe terms where a person's gender affects how their behaviour is described, for example an assertive woman being "bossy" while an assertive man is described as "taking charge". Take note of any gendered language you hear someone use or when you use a term that is gendered.

2. Observe who takes the notes in meetings when there is not a designated note taker and who organises the meetings (i.e., sends the invites). Is it men or women who are doing most of this work?

3. Notice whose faces are in the room (or on the screen) in your meetings. Who do you see, thinking about diversity in all senses (i.e., gender, age, race etc.)? Note also what the meeting is about – does the meeting focus change who is in the room in terms of diversity? How do people's characteristics relate to power? What is the influence of power in this situation?

During the session, encourage participants to share their observations and reflections.

Tips

This activity works best when participants are asked to observe their workplaces and think about these questions in advance of the discussion.

Additional resources

Emma (2017) 'You should've asked', *The Guardian*, 26 May. Available at:
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/26/gender-wars-household-chores-comic?CMP=share_btn_link (Accessed: 05 May 2022).

Emma (2020) 'Benevolent Sexism', *The Guardian*, 13 August. Available at:
https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/aug/13/benevolent-sexism-a-feminist-comic-explains-how-it-holds-women-back?CMP=share_btn_link (Accessed: 05 May 2022).

Project Implicit (2011) *Gender-Career IAT and Gender-Science IAT*. Available at:
https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html (Accessed: 05 May 2022).

Name game

10 Mins or Less	Participants: 2+	Facilitated or Non-facilitated	Online: Yes	In the Room: Yes

- **Activity type:** Check – activities that will help self-assess their opinions or beliefs

- **Purpose:** This activity is a gentle introduction to each other, going beyond the physical characteristics and labels that are attached to us and emphasising diversity. It works well as an icebreaker and to create deeper connections between participants.

- **Materials:** None

Instructions

We are all diverse. We all have an *equally* valid set of ideas and life experience behind us. Our names often suggest something about who we are and our background. They are so central to our identity, and normally the first information we volunteer about ourselves when interacting with others. Talking about someone's name can sometimes quickly unearth those more hidden aspects of our diversity.

Split the participants into groups of 3 and ask them to take it in 2 minute turns to discuss each group member's first name, last name/s, and nicknames. Where does their name come from? What does it mean? Who gave it to them? Who shortens it? How do they feel about it?

Remind the groups to ensure everyone has a chance to speak. After small group discussions bring the group back together and ask 2 or 3 volunteers to share interesting aspects of their discussion.

Tips

You could expand this activity with extra questions such as 'how do other people normally react to your name?', 'is there anything you hide about your name?', 'anything you try to make prominent?' or 'how do you change your name for different contexts and why?'
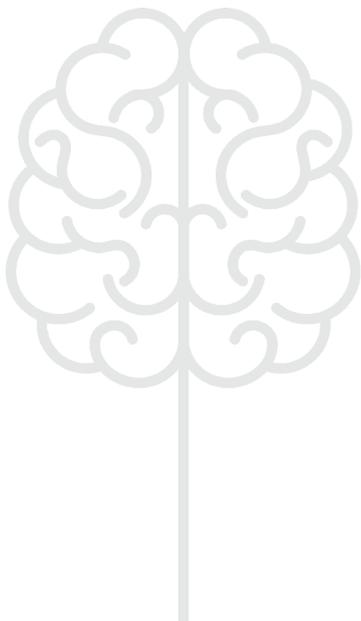
Just a minute

10 Mins or Less

Participants: Pairs

Facilitated or Non-facilitated

Online: Yes

In the Room: Yes

- **Activity type:** Check – activities that will help self-assess their opinions or beliefs
- **Purpose:** To explore our awareness of, and experiences of, inclusion and discrimination in the workplace.
- **Materials:** None

Instructions

BBC Radio 4 hosts a game show called Just A Minute – players try to talk about a particular topic for 1 minute without hesitation, repetition or deviation. It's a fun game, but it's also a really good way to express what you know or can think of about a topic. The players who do best often make up a story or recollect an experience. Narrative makes things easier to remember and keep control of.

Put the participants in pairs. Ask them to each try to speak for a minute (without worrying about hesitation, repetition, or deviation) on one of the subjects below. They should time themselves and keep going for 60 seconds. It's not a test – just a challenge.

Tips

To extend this activity, allow longer than 1 min; ask the listener in the pair to try to remember as much as they can about what they hear and report it back to the group.

This activity can easily be adapted to other discussion topics.

Consult the facilitation tips in the introductory chapter for advice on facilitating sensitive topics.

Subjects

1. 'A time I considered diversity/equality/ inclusion/feminism at work…'.
2. 'A time I saw inequality at work…'.

Hierarchy of masculinity

10-30 Mins

Participants: 2+

Facilitated: Yes

Online: Yes

In the Room: Yes

- **Activity type:** Disrupt – activities that will challenge their opinions
- **Purpose:** To spark discussion about the traits that are stereotypically associated with certain genders, how they manifest in different contexts, and how they affect everyone.
- **Materials:** Virtual whiteboard if online; pens and sticky notes if in the room

Instructions

Gender stereotypes - how we are expected to behave and "perform" in order to be perceived or recognised as feminine or masculine – are not fixed but depend on time and place. Gender stereotypes intersect in important ways with other aspects of identity, such as class and race, but to keep the discussion focused here we're focusing on gender. Gender stereotypes are binary, and people (most often women) can experience discrimination in binary terms. But behaving in particular ways can affect whether others perceive us as more or less of a man or more or less of a woman and being seen as more manly or more womanly can also result in discrimination. In addition, when people behave in ways that are not typically associated with their gender it can be perceived negatively. In many UK work settings, the attributes and behaviours that are most valued are typically associated with masculinity.

The participants are going to construct a hierarchy of masculinity using the whiteboard in the link (online)/sticky notes provided

(in the room). First, they will add any attribute or behaviour that might be associated with being masculine e.g., assertiveness, financial independence, logical, analytical brain, etc.

After 5 minutes, ask each person to choose 5 attributes or behaviours that are valued highly in their workplace. Ask volunteers to share their choices and encourage observation of similarities and differences. See how easily they could position the set of attributes into a hierarchy of significance.

Next, ask the group to reflect on characteristics that are perceived positively/rewarded when displayed by men but negatively when displayed by women. If participants have experience, what happens, or they think what would happen if these behaviours and characteristics were displayed by non-binary people or trans people?

Facilitate discussion of participants' reflections. You may find these prompts useful.

- What are the consequences of these behaviours and attributes being a) encouraged and b) gendered? In what circumstances would this advantage or disadvantage you/others and why?
- Does adhering to any of these stereotypes result in you being perceived as more/less of a woman or more/less of a man?
- Which of the stereotypes do you think are widely held in the UK or in other places you have experience of?
- Which of the stereotypes do you think have persisted over time, and which ones are fading/emerging?
- Are there any stereotypes here that you don't recognise?

Tips

It is easy for participants in this activity to become too focused on criticising patriarchy. It is also easy for some voices to be heard much more than others. Make sure you bring participants back to focus and to discuss it a bit more in depth.

This activity works well with Celebrate Difference on page 40.

Additional resources

Amrani, I. (2019) 'Modern masculinity', *The Guardian*, 14 August. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/series/modern-masculinity (Accessed: 05 May 2022).

Bering, J. (2021) *Gender Doesn't Matter* [Podcast]. Available at: https://open.spotify.com/episode/27VUq6HE6NzUGnfQ0oy30z (Accessed: 05 May 2022).

Perry, G. (2016) *The Descent of Man*. London: Penguin Books.

Desert island

30 Mins or More

Participants: 2+

Facilitated: Yes

Online: Yes

In the Room: Yes

- **Activity type:** Disrupt – activities that will challenge their opinions
- **Purpose:** To encourage groups to reflect on the diversity assumptions they bring in the first place.
- **Materials:** None

Instructions

Place participants into groups of 3+. Set the scene:

You have been shipwrecked on a potentially habitable desert island. On the beach, you find a magic lamp that enables you to summon any three people (living, dead or fictional) to join you. (Facilitators at this stage have a choice: 1) leave the objective ambiguous, or 2) suggest groups decide whether they intend to try to escape or try to settle.) In the next 15 minutes, discuss and decide who you are bringing to the island. Be prepared to explain your reasoning to the whole group when we come back together.

Ask each group to explain who they chose and why, and then lead discussion about the groups' decisions - what were the most important considerations? Personality, skills, experience, or characteristics, such as age, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation? Have you assembled a diverse team? Encourage participants to reflect on what shapes their choices and the options who came to mind (for example, does television present more options of male survival experts than women?). After the discussion, ask groups whether they would like to reconsider any of their selections.

Tips

Use questions such as 'what do you think the point of this activity was?' and 'how does this concept manifest in your work/teams?' to encourage further discussion on how this activity relates back to participants.

A status game

| 10-30 Mins | Participants: 2+ | Facilitated: Yes | Online: Yes | In the Room: Yes |

- **Activity type:** Disrupt – activities that will challenge their opinions
- **Purpose:** To reflect on how we and others "perform" status in our daily lives and consider different ways of interacting where status doesn't involve misuse of power.
- **Materials:** Chat function if online; pens and sticky notes if in the room

Instructions

Social status is the level of social value a person is considered to hold. More specifically, it refers to the relative level of respect, honour, assumed competence, and deference accorded to people, groups, and organizations in a society

We all have status – some earned, some assumed, some as a result of unfair inequality. Your status can change in different settings and sometimes it's up to you what you do with it. You can decide how you treat people of different status and give everyone an equal opportunity.

Tell the participants to imagine numbers 1-10 represent status.

Level 1 status is at the bottom of the heap. Might be lowly, humble, deferential. Might use that grovelling servitude to climb up the ladder; might think they should have higher status; might think that's all they deserve or could ever achieve.

Level 10 status has all the power. Can be conceited, arrogant, egotistical but they don't have to be. They can wield that status with kindness and generosity. If they know they have high status they can choose what to do with their power. Not everyone with high status plays high status – often great leaders and thinkers and powerful people seem very accessible and down to earth.

Give each participant a number (ensure you assign the full range, even if it means big differences) and tell them to imagine they are working in a big office block - management on the top floor and the maintenance staff in the basement. Imagine there is a shared intranet where messages come up for everyone to see and respond to. You will share these "intranet messages" with everyone, using the Chat function (if online), and should also decide upon and state the status of the person asking the question. Ask participants to respond in character, but without disclosing their status number to start with, so others can guess contributors' status.

Suggested intranet messages:

- Who do I need to speak to about repairing the photocopier?
- We have spare theatre tickets tonight. Anyone interested?
- Leftover conference sandwiches on Level 10. Help yourself.
- How much wine can we order for the Christmas party?

Now ask participants to reply disclosing the status number:

- The bins on Level 3 need emptying.
- Anyone order a taxi for the airport?
- We need a volunteer leader for a lunchtime community project.
- Can anyone recommend a good PA?
- Does anyone know how to light a fire?

Facilitate discussion of participants' reflections. Here are some useful questions:

- If you can see someone has less status than you, how do you treat them? And how do you treat yourself in that relationship?
- If you see someone has more status than you, how do you treat them?
- If you don't know how someone sees themselves, or other people see them, how do you treat them?

Tips

To extend this activity ask participants to have a go at writing a comment/question for others to react to. This can be done with or without status number.
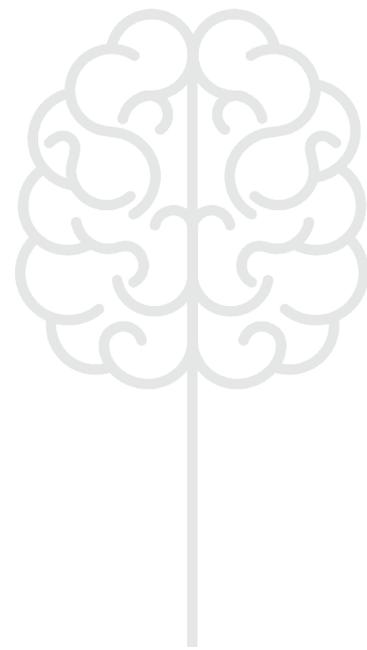
Celebrate difference

🕐	👤	🤝	💻	🪑
10-30 Mins	Participants: 2+	Facilitated or Non-facilitated	Online: Yes	In the Room: Yes

- **Activity type:** Change – activities that will help implement small changes

- **Purpose:** To celebrate different experiences and perspectives already present in people's lives; to acknowledge the benefits of the difference in the room; to reflect on what changes or actions people would like to implement; to learn from others' experiences.

- **Materials:** Virtual whiteboard if online; pens and sticky notes if in the room

Instructions

what value do you think different perspectives bring?

Start the conversation by posing the question 'what value do you think different perspectives bring?

Next, get each person to think about the different perspectives already present in their lives and using the whiteboard (online)/sticky notes (in the room) write down the aspects they would like to celebrate. Discuss with the group the many ways in which difference can be found e.g., ethnicity, gender, field of study, skills etc.

Ask participants: How do different perspectives contribute to your research team/work with colleagues?

Now get each person to reflect on the changes they could make to reduce inequality and get the most out of difference 1) personally, 2) for

the project, 3) within their organisation and 4) societally. For example, individuals can raise their awareness of diversity and that of others, highlight use of gendered terms/labels when they hear them, be an active bystander; teams can create space for safe discussion; organisations can provide support and resources. Discuss contributions starting from the personal and moving up to the societal. Use the whiteboard in the link (online)/or sticky notes provided (in the room) to write these down.

> **Tips**
>
> This activity links well with activities in Creative Conversations for Responsible Innovation: On your Perspective.

Acknowledgements