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Using intersectionality to understand structural inequality in Scotland: Evidence synthesis



Equality, Poverty and Social Security



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1. Key Findings

What is intersectionality?

- The concept of intersectionality, has long been used to articulate and analyse the lived reality of those who experience multiple and compounding inequalities, particularly within Black feminism. The analysis framework and term “intersectionality” was originally coined by American critical legal race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989¹, who used the term to refer the double discrimination of racism and sexism faced by Black women.
- There exists many different definitions of intersectionality in the literature, and academics have highlighted a lack of understanding of the central tenets of intersectionality.
- Looking across the various definitions in the literature, the key elements of intersectionality are:
 - A recognition that **people are shaped by simultaneous membership of multiple interconnected social categories.**
 - The interaction between multiple social categories occurs within **a context of connected systems and structures of power** (e.g. laws, policies, governments). A recognition of inequality of power is key to intersectionality.
 - **Structural inequalities**, reflected as relative disadvantage and privilege, **are the outcome of interconnected social categories, power relations and contexts.**

¹ Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams (1989) “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989:139–67

Intersectionality in policymaking

The evidence included in this synthesis suggests that:

- An intersectional approach does not give higher status to any one inequality or experience of discrimination.
- Policymakers need to consider power dynamics and their own experiences and influence when making decisions.
- Evidence should be put in context, including the historical and contemporary structures of inequalities in wider society, and within local contexts.
- Currently in Scotland there is a lack of intersectional data on outcomes, and policymaking rarely takes an intersectional approach. Where an intersectional approach has been attempted, this could be developed further.
- A “one size fits all” approach to narrowing inequality leaves people behind, especially where multiple inequalities intersect.
- Too often a dilution or misappropriation of intersectionality is used which attempts to work “for everyone” and as a consequence ignores the specific and nuanced experiences of discriminations at the intersections of inequalities.

Spotlight examples

- The Poverty and Inequality Commission commissioned research that took an intersectional approach to understand lived experience of poverty. The research found that individuals with various intersecting protected characteristics experienced unique barriers that reduced their financial security and limited their ability to afford food and other essentials, including in accessing public services; digital poverty; and difficulties accessing and navigating the social security system.

- An intersectional approach was used to understand racial inequality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from Public Health England and National Records of Scotland showed that people from minority ethnic groups were more likely to contract COVID-19 and more likely to experience serious health outcomes. However, taking account of a range of factors, including socio-economic circumstance and reduced access to healthcare, demonstrates that the link between being a member of a minority ethnic group and a heightened risk of contracting and experiencing serious outcomes from COVID-19 is not direct.
- Research from Equate Scotland used an intersectional approach to understand the experiences of women working in or studying science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and the built environment. The research found that women with intersecting protected characteristics, including disabled women, LGBT women, minority ethnic women, women with caring responsibilities and women aged over 35, faced a number of different barriers in STEM, including discrimination and harassment.
- Research from Inclusion Scotland focused on the experiences of disabled people with intersecting protected characteristics when accessing services. The research was co-produced with disabled people, and found that disabled people with intersecting characteristics faced distinct barriers when accessing services – including a denial of choice, control and person-centred services – that they attributed, at least in part, to their intersecting identities.

Intersectionality for analysts

The evidence included in this synthesis suggests that:

- Analysts should pose critical questions throughout the research process. For example: who is included within this group? What role does inequality play, including the privilege and power experienced by the group? What are the similarities across groups that are often viewed as different?

- Analysts should practice reflexivity by asking themselves questions about their own social positions, values, assumptions, interests and experiences and how these can shape the research and data analysis design and process, as well as putting the research and statistical findings into context.
- Analysts should ensure that people at different intersections, particularly those from multiple marginalised groups, are included in research. Participatory approaches to research, when inclusively designed and implemented, can be a strong way to ensure that people with intersecting characteristics, in particular marginalised communities, are actively engaged in research from conceptualisation through implementation and dissemination. Such approaches view researchers and community members more equally, with each seen as having unique expertise.
- Statistical approaches to intersectional data analysis include: cross-tabulation analysis, which is what is currently most commonly used across the public sector in Scotland; interactions within multiple regression models; comparing multiple regressions run within different contextual variables, and multi-level models.

2. Purpose

This report presents a synthesis of available literature on the concept and applications of intersectionality. It is intended as a resource to build the knowledge and expertise among public sector analysts and policymakers required to analyse, report and use equality data to develop effective services for those with intersecting protected characteristics.

The four primary aims of this report are to contribute to understanding of:

- What intersectionality means and how it can be applied to policymaking.
- How intersectionality can be integrated throughout the analytical process.
- Examples of how the concept of intersectionality has been used.
- Available resources that the reader can use to further deepen understanding.

This report is not intended to be an exhaustive review of all of the available literature, but rather an overview of the common themes. Available research and examples have been selected that are most relevant to the Scottish and wider UK context to provide an illustration of how the concept of intersectionality, and the approach that follows, can be used to the benefit of services and outcomes. See [Section 8](#) for a full list of useful resources.

The literature related to the concept of intersectionality is complex, and disagreement exists within academic communities from different disciplines and specialisations. In addition, in a public sector context it may be difficult to meet the 'gold standards' presented in the academic literature for a number of reasons. Keeping all this in mind, this report intends to set out the best options available to policymakers and analysts in the Scottish public sector, and a range of considerations will be presented to this end in [Section 7](#).

This report is arranged in distinct standalone sections, enabling the reader to select those that would be most useful or relevant to their own work. This report will take the following structure:

- [Section 3](#) will highlight what is meant by the concept of intersectionality.
- [Section 4](#) will focus on what it means to take an intersectional approach to policymaking.
- [Section 5](#) provides spotlight examples to illustrate how intersectionality has been used to further understanding of structural inequality.
- [Section 6](#) looks at how intersectionality can be applied in public sector research and data analysis.
- [Section 7](#) concludes by offering a range of considerations for policymakers and analysts to take forward when utilising the concept of intersectionality in their work.
- [Section 8](#) provides a list of key resources to aid further research on the topic of intersectionality.
- [Section 9](#) is a glossary of key terms.

3. What is meant by the concept of ‘intersectionality’?

The term ‘intersectionality’ is not yet in everyday usage, but awareness is growing in academic and policymaking contexts. It is essential that the term is clearly defined before it is applied to Scottish policymaking, and the implications for research and data analysis are understood.

The term ‘intersectionality’ has its roots in Black feminist activism, and was originally coined by American critical legal race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw used the term intersectionality to refer to the double discrimination of racism and sexism faced by Black women, critiquing the “single-axis framework that is dominant in antidiscrimination law.. feminist theory and anti-racist politics” for its focus on the experiences of the most privileged members of subordinate groups.² Specifically, Crenshaw highlighted legal cases wherein women were required to choose between bringing a claim of racism or sexism and could not say that they had been discriminated against due to the combined effects of race and sex.³

Crenshaw provided the following definition of intersectionality:

“Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking.”⁴

However, while Crenshaw was the first to use the term intersectionality, the concept did not represent a new way of thinking. Black feminist literature preceding Crenshaw’s use of the term highlights examples of inequality affecting Black women as a result of sexism and racism. For example, the Combahee River Collective, a Black lesbian socialist feminist organisation, published “A Black Feminist Statement,” in 1977 which is often cited as one of the earliest expressions of intersectionality.⁵

² Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams (1989) “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989:139–67, p. 149

³ Ibid

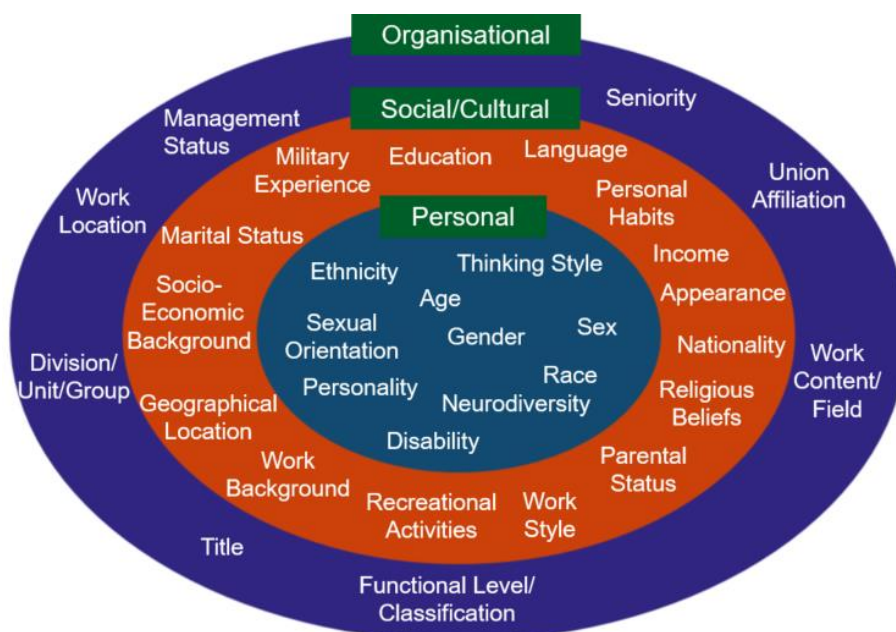
⁴ Ibid

⁵ Cole, E. R. (2009). ‘Intersectionality and research in psychology’. *American psychologist*, 64(3), 170.

In 1990 Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener⁶ developed a framework for thinking about the different dimensions of diversity within individuals and institutions, known as the diversity wheel. This is a useful tool for thinking about how different characteristics intersect with systems and structures to shape a person's experience.

The below diagram is derived from Loudon and Rosener's framework and depicts a series of concentric circles. The primary dimensions of diversity, personal characteristics such as age, ethnicity and gender, are shown in the centre. Socially and culturally a person is also influenced by environmental, social and cultural factors and experiences, learnings from family, friendships, community, nationality, belief system. Within organisations, a person is influenced by the group or area in which we work, and the structures or processes that they operate within, which may include systemic barriers and bias.

Figure 1: Diversity Wheel demonstrating how personal characteristics intersect with systems and structures to shape a person's experience.



While there were early theoretical developments following its first use in 1989^{7,8}, the past decade has seen a rapid increase in the usage and applications of the term

⁶ Loden, Marilyn; Rosener, Judy (1990) *Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource*, McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing

⁷ Collins, P. H. (2002). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. routledge.

⁸ Crenshaw, K. (1990). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stan. L. Rev.*, 43, 1241.

‘intersectionality’ across a varying range of academic disciplines.⁹ Awareness of the concept is also growing within the public and third sectors in Scotland and wider UK where it has the potential to inform the development and delivery of policies and services.

For example, the Equality and Human Rights Commission¹⁰ have advocated for the concept of intersectionality by developing their own definition which allows them to apply the concept practically to equality and human rights monitoring:

“Intersectionality is an analytical tool¹¹ that we use for the purpose of equality and human rights monitoring to show the distinct forms of harm, abuse, discrimination and disadvantage experienced by people when multiple categories of social identity interact with each other.”¹²

In part due to this rapid increase in the application of intersectionality across a number of disciplines, there exists many different definitions of intersectionality in the literature, and academics have highlighted a lack of understanding of the central tenets of intersectionality.¹³ Since its original usage, the term ‘intersectionality’ has also been expanded to include intersections between a range of ‘social categories’ in addition to race and gender, such as disability, sexual orientation, occupation and socio-economic disadvantage, and wider life experiences.

⁹ Bauer, G. R., Churchill, S. M., Mahendran, M., Walwyn, C., Lizotte, D., & Villa-Rueda, A. A. (2021). Intersectionality in quantitative research: A systematic review of its emergence and applications of theory and methods. *SSM-population health*, 100798.

¹⁰ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2017), ‘Measurement framework for equality and human rights’, [Measurement framework for equality and human rights | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/measurement-framework-for-equality-and-human-rights), p. 52

¹¹ A data analysis tool can be thought of as tool that helps analysts understand and interpret data. These tools vary depending on the goals of the research and type of data collected (e.g. qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods).

¹² Ibid, p. 52

¹³ Bauer, G. R., Churchill, S. M., Mahendran, M., Walwyn, C., Lizotte, D., & Villa-Rueda, A. A. (2021). Intersectionality in quantitative research: A systematic review of its emergence and applications of theory and methods. *SSM-population health*, 100798.

For the purposes of this report, we refer the reader to attempts to identify common themes or assumptions underpinning usage of ‘intersectionality’.^{14,15,16,17} To summarise, we propose that the foundational elements of intersectionality can be understood as:

- A recognition that **people are shaped by their simultaneous membership of multiple interconnected social categories.**
- The interaction between multiple social categories occurs within a **context of connected systems and structures of power** (e.g. laws, policies, governments). A recognition of inequality of power is key to intersectionality.
- **Structural inequalities**, reflected as relative disadvantage and privilege, are the **outcomes of the interaction between social categories, power relations and contexts.** As a result, an individual’s experiences of inequality can be chronic or transitory, creating unique lived experiences.

The relationship between these three key tenets is presented in Figure 2 below. In particular, it is important to note that it is the interaction or “intersection” of two or more characteristics with power dynamics within a given context that gives rise to inequality, not just the presence of intersecting characteristics on their own.

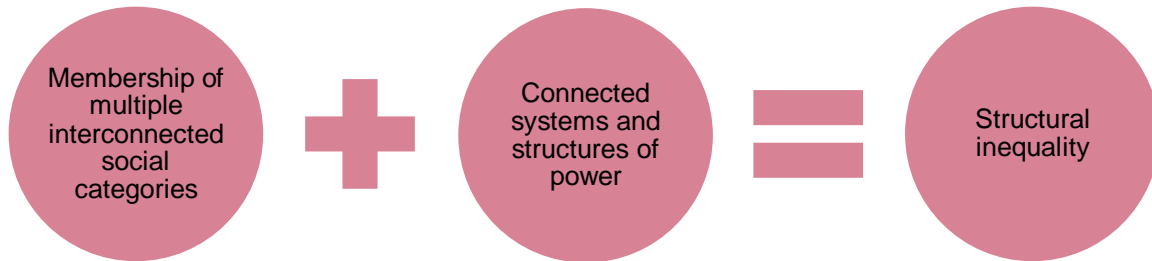
¹⁴ Collins, P. H. (2015). Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. *Annual review of sociology*, 41, 1-20.

¹⁵ Else-Quest, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2016). Intersectionality in quantitative psychological research: I. Theoretical and epistemological issues. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(2), 155–170. doi:10.1177/0361684316629797

¹⁶ Hankivsky, O. (2014). Intersectionality 101. *The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, SFU*, 36.

¹⁷ Scott, Nicholas; Siltanen, Janet (2016), ‘Intersectionality and quantitative methods: assessing regression from a feminist perspective’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, Intersectionality and Quantitative Methods (researchgate.net)*, p. 5 -6

Figure 2: Diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the key tenets of intersectionality.



In addition to understanding the central tenets of intersectionality, the reader may also find it helpful to consider what intersectionality is not. A recent report commissioned by the Poverty and Inequality Commission¹⁸ reviewed available literature on the concept of intersectionality and succinctly highlighted a number of inaccuracies in understanding of the concept of intersectionality. For ease of reference, we summarise these inaccuracies here:

- **Intersectionality is not a synonym for diversity** – there is no such thing as an ‘intersectional’ group of people, the more appropriate term for those who experience multiple and compounding inequalities would be to state they are from “intersectionally marginalised communities” **and** to be explicit about which intersections we are referring to e.g.; South Asian Women experiencing racism and sexism.
- **Intersectionality is primarily a tool for understanding invisible power relations and how they shape inequality, not identity.** Intersectionality looks at “interlocking” systems of oppression and how these play out in individual’s lives.
- **Intersectionality is not about adding up different kinds of inequality**, and does not look to simply add up the sum of different oppressions (e.g. gender + race + disability). Intersectionality instead

¹⁸ Poverty and Inequality Commission (2021), ‘Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland’, [Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](https://www.povertyinequality.scot.nhs.uk/intersectionality-revealing-the-realities-of-poverty-and-inequality-in-scotland)

aims to shed light on how multiple dimensions and systems of inequality interact with one another and create distinct experiences and outcomes.

- **Intersectionality is not about pitting different people or groups against each other to assess who is most marginalised or disadvantaged.** Instead, intersectionality aims to understand how different people's experiences are shaped where multiple forms of oppression or disadvantage interact.
- **Intersectionality is not looking to construct a hierarchy of inequality**, where some forms of oppression (e.g. racism, sexism, ableism) are seen as more important than others.¹⁹

What intersectionality means in practice is best illustrated by drawing on the multitude of examples provided in the literature. In her original writings on the topic, Crenshaw gave the following example:

“Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women’s experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women.”²⁰

More recently, Ashlee Christoffersen, academic at the University of Edinburgh, provided the following example:

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Crenshaw, Kimberle’ Williams (1989) “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989:139–67, p. 149

“A person is not, for example, a woman on one hand and disabled on the other; rather she is the combination of these at the same time, that is, a disabled woman. In this example her identity as a woman is shaped by her identity as disabled, and vice versa as the elements of identity are not lived or experienced separately.”²¹

Examples of how the concept of intersectionality have been used to understand structural inequality in Scottish and UK contexts are provided in [Section 5](#) of this report.

Whilst the term ‘intersectionality’ originated in Black feminist theory, it is now often used to refer to the interactions between the nine protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010, plus wider characteristics that shape lived experiences of discrimination, inequality and privilege such as socio-economic disadvantage, occupation and care-experience.²² The broader usage to refer to all nine protected characteristics aligns with the requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty that Scottish public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, for those with protected characteristics. It is acknowledged, however, that recent years has seen criticism that the concept of intersectionality tends to be used by policymakers in an unspecified way across the protected characteristics, representing a departure from the original principles of intersectionality as being focussed on race and gender.^{23,24}

Recent research, carried out by Ashlee Christoffersen, considered how intersectionality is conceptualised and operationalised among policymakers and in

²¹ Christoffersen, Ashlee (2017), *Intersectional Approaches to equality research and data, Research and data briefing 2 Intersectional approaches to equality research and data.pdf* (ecu.ac.uk), p. 3

²² Under the Equality Act 2010, the nine protected characteristics are: age; disability; sex; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; and sexual orientation.

²³ Christoffersen, Ashlee (2019). Are we all ‘baskets of characteristics?’ Intersectional slippages and the displacement of race in English and Scottish equality policy. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Intersectionality in Public Policy* (pp. 705-731). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

²⁴ Mügge, L., Montoya, C., Emejulu, A., & Weldon, S. L. (2018). Intersectionality and the politics of knowledge production. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1(1-2), 17-36.

the third sector in Scotland and England.²⁵ The research comprised case studies of three local networks of equality organisations with documented commitments to intersectionality; employment interviews; focus groups; participant observation and analysis of documents published between 2016 and 2018.

Five competing concepts of intersectionality were identified as being used in third sector equality organisations and by policymakers, each with different implications for intersectionality marginalised groups and intersectional justice. These are presented in Table 1 below.

²⁵ Christoffersen, Ashlee 'The Politics of Intersectional Practice: Towards an Intersectional Gender Equality Architecture', First Minister's National Advisory Council On Women And Girls Circle 18 August 2020: Creating an Intersectional Gender Architecture, [Solidarity, coalition and intersectional practice: a case study \(onescotland.org\)](https://www.onescotland.org/2020/08/18/creating-an-intersectional-gender-architecture/); Ashlee Christoffersen (2021), 'Intersectionality in practice: Research findings for practitioners & policy makers', [Intersectionality-in-practice.pdf \(ed.ac.uk\)](https://www.ed.ac.uk/research/outputs/intersectionality-in-practice)

Table 1: Concepts of intersectionality used in third sector equality organisations and policy in Scotland and England²⁶

Concept	Characteristics	Strengths (+) and Weaknesses (-)
Generic	Generic intersectionality is characterised by no, or very little, focus on any equality strand or strands in particular: the same work is delivered to benefit 'all'. Addressing issues that affect 'everybody' (i.e. not only or even primarily marginalised equality groups).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No attention to power and marginality. - Work on issues that affect the most disadvantaged are seen as not being intersectional.
Pan equality	Addressing issues that affect all/most marginalised equality groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Avoids deciding in advance which issues affect which social groups. + Enables more structural (vs. individual) understandings of intersectionality. - Disregards difference and prevents work on issues which are not 'common'.
Multi-strand	Addressing equality strands in parallel, separately but at the same time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additive (instead of being viewed as always shaping one another, inequalities are still viewed separately and added and subtracted from one another). - Intersectionality treated the same as diversity. - Makes intersectional marginalisation invisible.

²⁶ Ibid

Concept	Characteristics	Strengths (+) and Weaknesses (-)
Diversity within	Addressing intersections within an equality strand, e.g. differences among women. One strand/inequality viewed as more important than others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additive. - Marginalised people are viewed as just oppressed and 'intersectionalities' thought of as 'additional barriers'. - Unable to incorporate the idea that inequality structures are always shaping each other, producing not only marginalisation, but also privilege.
Intersections of strands	Work of/with specific groups sharing intersecting identities, e.g. minority ethnic women, disabled women, etc. No particular strand is primary or more in focus than the other(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Intersectionally marginalised people viewed as being able to act for themselves. - Intersectionality often individualised (to the exclusion of thinking about inequality structures).

The research concluded that:

- Within policymaking and third sector contexts in Scotland, intersectionality tends to be used in an unspecified way across the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.
- Scottish and English policy documents used many different definitions of intersectionality, and the use of the term was largely individualised, descriptive, additive and superficial.

The work makes a number of recommendations for policy and policymakers, including:

- Policymakers should be specific about what they mean by intersectionality.
- Fund organisations representing people who share intersecting identities.
- Single strand characteristic organisations, such as organisations representing those with a single protected characteristic, should be held to account for facilitating meaningful participation and self-representation of intersectionality marginalised groups.
- Organisations should build greater unity and coalition when working around common issues, while highlighting and prioritising intersectionality marginalised experiences and leadership.²⁷

²⁷ Ibid

4. What does it mean to take an intersectional approach to policymaking?

As a concept, intersectionality has been interpreted in the literature as a theory, methodology, paradigm, lens, tool and framework.^{28,29, 30, 31} This report does not seek to distinguish between these interpretations, but rather to introduce the key aspects of what it means to take an intersectional approach to understand structural inequality within a policymaking context.

According to Crenshaw, the focus of an intersectional approach is to highlight the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.³² For the purposes of this report, the ‘intersectional approach’ can be best understood as a way of identifying, understanding and tackling structural inequality in a given context that accounts for the lived experience of people with intersecting identities. For example, intersectionality helps us to understand how people experience services, such as education and healthcare, differently as a result of their identity and unequal power dynamics. Understanding these differences facilitates the development of more effective policy that tackles structural disadvantage experienced by marginalised groups.

A key feature of an intersectional approach is that it does not give a higher status to any one inequality or experience of discrimination.³³ Hankivsky and colleagues argue that “intersectionality encourages critical reflection that allows researchers and decision makers to move beyond the singular categories that are typically favoured in equity driven analyses (e.g., sex and gender in sex and gender based analysis) ... to consider the complex relationships and interactions between social locations.”³⁴

²⁸ Hankivsky, O. (2014). Intersectionality 101. *The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, SFU*, 36.

²⁹ Collins, P. H. (2015). Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. *Annual review of sociology*, 41, 1-20.

³⁰ Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 38(4), 785-810.

³¹ Sigle-Rushton, Wendy (2013) Intersectionality. In: Evans, Mary and Williams, Carolyn, (eds.) *Gender: The Key Concepts*. Routledge key guides. Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

³² Crenshaw, K W (1991) ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’, *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6, pp. 1241-1299.

³³ First Ministers Advisory Council on Women and Girls (202), ‘2020 Report and Recommendations’, [562006_SCT1120576152-002_NACWG.pdf \(onescotland.org\)](https://www.onescotland.org/562006_SCT1120576152-002_NACWG.pdf), p. 8

³⁴ Hankivsky, Olena; Grace, Daniel; Hunting, Gemma; Giesbrecht, Melissa; Fridkin, Alycia; Rudrum, Sarah; Ferlatte, Olivier; Clark, Natalie (2014), ‘An intersectionality-based policy analysis framework:

Adopting an intersectional approach also calls for policymakers and analysts to “analyse their own power dynamics as much as the world they wish to change”.³⁵ Thus, an intersectional approach is not just about considering the experiences of those at the intersection of multiple characteristics but about policymakers and analysts assessing their own experiences and how this impacts on their ability to develop, deliver and evaluate policies in an equitable way.

In addition, taking an intersectional approach requires that evidence be put into context, including the historical and contemporary structures of inequality in wider society, and within local contexts.³⁶ Local contexts could include, for example, education, employment, and healthcare settings. It is crucial to examine the dynamic interaction between individuals and institutional actors (e.g. central government, local government, public bodies) as this provides a more comprehensive examination of policy success and failure.

There have been a number of formalised approaches that have encouraged consideration of intersectionality within the policymaking process. A detailed overview of some of these approaches can be found in a paper produced by Olena Hankivsky, Professor of Public Policy, in 2012.³⁷ A summary of these approaches as well as additional approaches are provided in Table 2 below.

critical reflections on a methodology for advancing equity’, *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 13(119), ([PDF An intersectionality-based policy analysis framework: Critical reflections on a methodology for advancing equity \(researchgate.net\)](#)), p. 2

³⁵ Scott-Villiers, P. and Oosterom, M (2016) 'Power, Poverty and Inequality' *IDS Bulletin* Vol. 47 No. 5. <https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/2790/ONLINE%20ARTICLE>

³⁶ Christoffersen, Ashlee (2017), *Intersectional Approaches to equality research and data*, [Research and data briefing 2 Intersectional approaches to equality research and data.pdf \(ecu.ac.uk\)](#), p. 4

³⁷ Hankivsky, O. (Ed.). (2012). *An Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework*. Vancouver, BC: Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy, Simon Fraser University.

Table 2: International examples of intersectional approaches

Approach	Details	Limitations
Gender Based Analysis+ (GBA+) ³⁸	In 2011, the Canadian Government expanded their Gender Based Analysis policy analysis tool to GBA+ which adds other characteristics to the original women-focussed agenda, including race, ethnicity, religion, age and disability. This allows for consideration of how intersections between these characteristics influences experience of government policies. The GBA+ approach superseded the earlier Sex and Gender Based Analysis (SGBA).	Some critics consider the ‘addition’ of other minorities to the original women-focused agenda to be antithetical to the concept of intersectionality, which does not centre any one group.
Health Impact Assessment Tools (HIAs) ³⁹	The World Health Organization defined HIAs as “a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, program or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population” (1999, p. 4). The aim is to examine positive or negative effects of	HIAs have been criticised for their lack of attention to policies beyond those that affect the internal operations of nation states.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid, p. 13 - 17

Approach	Details	Limitations
	<p>policies aimed at reducing health inequities across different population groups. HIAs, and variants of, have been used in a number of countries, including the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and throughout the EU.</p>	
<p>Wellbeing approaches based on participation⁴⁰</p>	<p>New Zealand has been developing approaches based on understanding how people in minority communities experience the world.</p>	<p>These are predominantly based on one characteristic but do discuss some intersectionalities and are particularly powerful in terms of identifying power relations and values.</p>

⁴⁰ [Providing a Māori perspective on wellbeing \(tpk.govt.nz\)](https://www.tpk.govt.nz)

Hankivsky and colleagues developed Intersectionality Based Policy Analysis (IBPA).⁴¹ IBPA aims to improve current tools for evaluating the equality implications of policies. IBPA comprises a set of guiding principles and a checklist of twelve questions that policymakers should seek to answer when developing or implementing policy. The questions include five 'descriptive' questions designed to generate critical background on a policy in question and six 'transformative' questions intended to assist with the identification of alternative policy responses and solutions specifically aimed at social and structural change that reduce inequities and promote social justice. These twelve questions are presented in the box below.

Descriptive

1. What knowledge, values, and experiences do you bring to this area of policy analysis?
2. What is the policy 'problem' under consideration?
3. How have representations of the 'problem' come about? This prompts policymakers to consider how a history of intersecting oppressive systems, such as sexism and racism, operate through policies to produce layers of inequity across a spectrum of people with diverse identities.
4. How are groups differentially affected by this representation of the 'problem'?
5. What are the current policy responses to the 'problem'?

Transformative

6. What inequities actually exist in relation to the 'problem'?
7. Where and how can interventions be made to improve the problem?
8. What are feasible short, medium and long-term solutions?
9. How will proposed policy responses reduce inequities?
10. How will implementation and uptake be assured?

⁴¹ Hankivsky, Olena; Grace, Daniel; Hunting, Gemma; Giesbrecht, Melissa; Fridkin, Alycia; Rudrum, Sarah; Ferlatte, Olivier; Clark, Natalie (2014), 'An intersectionality-based policy analysis framework: critical reflections on a methodology for advancing equity', *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 13(119), ([PDF](#)) [An intersectionality-based policy analysis framework: Critical reflections on a methodology for advancing equity \(researchgate.net\)](#)

11. How will you know if inequities have been reduced?

12. How has the process of engaging in an intersectionality-based policy analysis transformed:

- Your thinking about relations and structures of power and inequity?
- The ways in which you and others engage in the work of policy development, implementation and evaluation?
- Broader conceptualisations, relations and effects of power asymmetry in the everyday world?

4.1. Applications of intersectionality within Scottish policymaking

Recent years have seen criticisms from equality stakeholders that little progress has been made with a separate single characteristic approach to policymaking in Scotland, and there have been increased calls for intersectional policymaking.^{42,43}

In 2020, the Poverty and Inequality Commission (PIC)⁴⁴ commissioned the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) Scotland to carry out interviews with policymakers working to reduce inequality in Scotland. The interviews focussed on the participant's understanding of intersectionality, how different experiences of inequality in Scotland are understood and the changes required to better recognise and respond to inequality.

Based on these interviews and existing research, the PIC report explores major cross-cutting policy agendas aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland to determine the extent to which they adopt an intersectional approach to analysing problems or developing solutions. Opportunities to take intersectional approaches to

⁴² E.g: Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity (2020), 'Improving data and evidence on ethnicity and health: initial advice and recommendations from the expert reference group on ethnicity', [Improving+Data+and+Evidence+on+Ethnic+Inequalities+in+Health+-+Initial+Advice+and+Recommendations+from+the+Expert+Reference+Group+on+COVID-19+and+Ethnicity.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁴³ First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (2020) '2020 Report and Recommendations', [562006_SCT1120576152-002_NACWG.pdf \(onescotland.org\)](#)

⁴⁴ Poverty and Inequality Commission (2020), 'Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland', [Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](#)

developing policy solutions, and to monitoring and evaluating outcomes are highlighted. The key findings from this research are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: IPPR Scotland assessment of Scottish Government policy agendas aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland and recommendations for an intersectional approach

Policy agenda	IPPR assessment in PIC report	IPPR recommendations for intersectional approach
Child poverty ⁴⁵	The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act places an obligation on the Scottish Government to meet four legally binding targets to reduce absolute and relative child poverty by 2030. The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, published in 2018, sets out actions against three key drivers of poverty ⁴⁶ and six 'priority families' ⁴⁷ at increased risk of poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cross-cutting areas, such as parental employment and transport, could take an intersectional approach to developing policy solutions and monitoring/evaluating outcomes. •An intersectional analysis of overlaps between priority family groups and other characteristics. •Collecting and analysing intersectional data on key indicators should be central to policy monitoring and evaluation.
Fair work ⁴⁸	The past four years has seen the establishment of Scotland's Fair Work Commission, investment in the expansion of available subsidised hours in early learning and childcare, action on gender pay gaps, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •There is a risk that intersecting inequalities are reserved for the Action Plan, where an intersectional approach is needed across policymaking.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 28 - 29

⁴⁶ The three key drivers of poverty: income from employment, income from social security and benefits in kind, and costs of living.

⁴⁷ The six priority families at increased risk of child poverty: lone parents, families with a disabled adult or child, young mothers, minority ethnic families, families with a child under the age of one, larger families with three or more children.

⁴⁸ Poverty and Inequality Commission (2020), 'Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland', [Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](https://www.povertyinequality.scot/), p. 29 - 31

Policy agenda	IPPR assessment in PIC report	IPPR recommendations for intersectional approach
	<p>new services devolved to Scotland to support people back into work. There has been progress, most notably through the 2019 Gender Pay Gap Action Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While progress has been made on labour market participation across all ethnic groups, substantial inequalities exist between men and women within ethnic groups. There are substantial pay gaps along the lines of ethnicity, gender and nationality. • There is a need for an intersectional approach to promoting good work by exploring the links between precarious work, mental health and ethnicity experienced by young workers.
Housing ⁴⁹	<p>Housing costs remain a key factor driving poverty in Scotland. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s Poverty in Scotland 2020 report⁵⁰ underlines the importance of reducing housing costs in solving poverty in Scotland, and the role housing costs play is clear in comparing rates of relative poverty pre- and post-housing costs. It’s also clear that intersecting inequalities affect access to affordable housing in Scotland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to apply an intersectional approach to understanding major drivers of poverty – including affordable housing – by understanding the role of multiple and often interacting systems of oppression. • Further research exploring the particular challenges facing people in Scotland experiencing multiple barriers to accessing appropriate and affordable housing is necessary, alongside a sustained focus on

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 31 - 32

⁵⁰ [Poverty in Scotland 2020 | JRF](#)

Policy agenda	IPPR assessment in PIC report	IPPR recommendations for intersectional approach
		lowering barriers for people from minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people, and larger families.
Economic policy ⁵¹	The adoption of inclusive growth as a pillar of Scotland’s revised Economic Strategy in 2015, and more recently the focus on a Wellbeing Economy has put a sharper focus on economic inequality in the Scottish Government’s approach to economic policymaking. Narrowing inequality has become a clear, cross-cutting objective for economic policymakers in Scotland. However, interventions and measures too often took a single-axis approach to understanding and tackling inequalities, risking an ineffective tick-box approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A localised approach to developing policy solutions is welcome, we are yet to see robust evidence of solutions designed to meet the needs of particular marginalised groups, in their local contexts, tried and tested in action. • Policymakers should broaden their view beyond geographic concentration of disadvantage to also focus on communities who are disadvantaged “because of who they are, where they’re from, or the colour of their skin”.⁵²
Cross-cutting agendas -	In recent years, the Scottish Government has put a clear focus on gender equality across a range of policy areas: from the Women’s Health Action Plan, to the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender mainstreaming and the collection, analysis and publication of intersectional, sex-disaggregated gender-sensitive data were identified as central to

⁵¹ Poverty and Inequality Commission (2020), ‘Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland’, [Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](#), p. 32 - 34

⁵² Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016) Race report: Healing a divided Britain, report. [Race report: Healing a divided Britain | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

Policy agenda	IPPR assessment in PIC report	IPPR recommendations for intersectional approach
gender equality ⁵³	Equally Safe Strategy, to the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan. This is seen as substantial progress, but there is also concern that this has led policymakers in some areas to think gendered inequality is now well understood. This is particularly the case in the context of economic and social policy, where it was felt policymaking often failed to connect the dots between unequal outcomes and gendered barriers to participation or progression in paid work.	<p>supporting a deeper understanding of inequality across Scotland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A model for gender mainstreaming efforts could be expanded and improved to support intersectional analysis of inequality in opportunity and outcomes for different groups of people across Scotland. • The work from the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls should be used by the Scottish Government to understand the varied realities of life in Scotland for low-income women, disabled women, minority ethnic women, LGBT women, and migrant women.
Cross cutting agendas – race equality ⁵⁴	The Scottish Government’s 2016 Race Equality Framework for Scotland was seen as an example of co-production between government and expert equalities organisations, but there was a view that the plan failed to touch on poverty in adequate detail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making progress towards an intersectional approach to policymaking in Scotland will clearly depend on building competence on how race and racialisation shape disadvantage in Scotland.

⁵³ Poverty and Inequality Commission (2020), 'Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland', [Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](https://www.povertyinequality.scot/), p. 34 - 35

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 36 - 37

Policy agenda	IPPR assessment in PIC report	IPPR recommendations for intersectional approach
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single strategy is not enough, and work is required to embed intersectional gender and race competency across government areas and functions, and to create effective accountability mechanisms across the Scottish Government.

The report concluded that:

- There is currently a lack of intersectional data on outcomes, which is slowing progress on understanding and tackling inequality in Scotland.
- Current policymaking processes rarely take an intersectional approach to analysing problems or developing solutions.
- There is a lack of coherence across policymaking and a lack of competence in how structural inequality shapes experiences and outcomes.
- A “one size fits all” approach to narrowing inequality leaves people behind, especially where multiple inequalities intersect. Policymakers need to better understand who existing policy interventions and policy service provision models serve well and less well.
- Policymaking processes in Scotland reinforce siloed approaches to tackling inequality. Policymaking processes should include a wider range of voices and experts across Scotland.
- There are no shortcuts. Addressing structural inequalities will take dedicated and sustained work across the Scottish Government, particularly on the issue of systemic racism.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Ibid

5. Spotlight examples of how the concept of intersectionality has been used to identify and understand structural inequality in Scotland

An intersectional approach can cast light on the lived experiences of people with intersecting identities, and help to develop policies and services that tackle structural inequality. This section of the report summarises four examples of where an intersectional approach has been used to identify and understand structural inequality. Examples have been selected to showcase the use of an intersectional approach in a range of policy areas relevant to the Scottish and wider UK context. It is important to note that while these examples provide a showcase of intersectional approaches already being undertaken, they do not necessarily represent best practice.

Spotlight Example One: Understanding experiences of poverty

IPPR Scotland were commissioned by Scotland's Poverty and Inequality Commission⁵⁶ to review existing research on intersecting inequalities in theory and practice; review existing policy and practice relevant to intersectionality; collect qualitative data from five individuals with lived experience of intersecting protected characteristics; and gather data from policy experts and academics.⁵⁷

A varied range of difficulties faced by those with lived experience of poverty and intersecting protected characteristics, including:

- **Barriers to accessing public services**, such as housing and health and care, and language barriers creating additional barriers as they tried to access services.

⁵⁶ An advisory non-departmental public body which provides independent advice and scrutiny to Scottish Ministers on poverty and inequality. [About - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](https://povertyinequality.scot)

⁵⁷ Poverty and Inequality Commission (2021), 'Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland', [Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](https://povertyinequality.scot)

For example, at the time of the research, Sequoia⁵⁸ was seeking asylum, lived alone and had chronic health conditions. Sequoia described how when she arrived in Scotland she was in temporary accommodation for a number of weeks, but when her money ran out she became destitute. She felt this would have been entirely preventable if she had known what support she was entitled to as someone seeking asylum.

- **Digital poverty**, including difficulties accessing computers and tablets. This was a persistent challenge for people living on low incomes.

For example, at the time of the research, Rowan was a young woman seeking asylum. She was studying at college part-time, and lived with her mother and younger siblings. A lack of reliable internet access or a computer or tablet device at home meant she was unable to continue with her college studies during lockdown. For her, the closure of colleges and libraries had cut off her ability to pursue her education almost entirely, and she worried about falling behind her classmates.

- **The social security system presented barriers to financial security**, such as due to administrative errors disrupting payments and a lack of information about how the process would work and how assessments would be carried out.

For example, at the time of the research, Fern worked part time and was a lone parent. She had lived in Scotland for around a decade and lived with her young son. Fern's experience was that the social security system had presented more barriers to financial security, where it should have provided a safety net to fall back on. Fern used to receive tax benefits, and had more recently applied for Universal Credit, but had her application affected by a payroll error that saw her pay counted twice in a single assessment period, and her benefit reduced to 10% of her normal payment as a result.

⁵⁸ All names are pseudonyms.

- Additional challenges arising among those **with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF)** due to unresolved immigration status, including barriers to paid employment due to unresolved asylum claims.

Sequoia described the sense of powerlessness generated by the system. She talked about not being signposted to help that she had later learned that she was entitled to, and information was often not available in any language other than English.

- **Difficulties affording food and other essentials.** Food insecurity was a persistent challenge for participants which, for some, was exacerbated during lockdown. This was related to being on very low incomes, but also interacted with other barriers in how participants could spend the limited funds they had, and difficulties in accessing appropriate food.

For Rowan, the challenge of finding food that her family were familiar with and could afford was intensified during lockdown. She and her family rely on an ASPEN card⁵⁹ provided by the Home Office, but that card can only be spent in shops and does not allow them to make purchases online. This caused particular challenges during lockdown as the family were not able to shop online, and Rowan or her mother would have to travel by bus during the peak of the pandemic to buy food, often having to visit multiple supermarkets. This pushed Rowan and her family into greater food insecurity, presenting additional risks to their health.⁶⁰

Spotlight Example Two: Understanding racial inequalities during COVID-19

Research looking at the impact of COVID-19 has found that minority ethnic people are more likely to contract and experience serious outcomes from COVID-19. During the first six months of the pandemic, people from minority ethnic groups in

⁵⁹ A debit payment issued by the UK Home Office to Asylum Seekers.

⁶⁰ Poverty and Inequality Commission (2020), 'Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland', [Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](https://www.povertyinequality.scot/)

England were almost three times as likely to contract COVID-19 and five times more likely to experience serious health outcomes.⁶¹ In Scotland, National Records of Scotland (NRS) found that between 12th March 2020 and 30th September 2021 deaths amongst people with Pakistani ethnicity were 3.7 times as likely to involve COVID-19 as people with White Scottish ethnicity. Deaths amongst people with Chinese ethnicity (1.7 times as likely), Indian ethnicity (1.7 times as likely) and Other Asian⁶² ethnicity (3.0 times as likely) were more likely to involve COVID-19 than people with White Scottish ethnicity.⁶³

Taking account of a range of factors demonstrates that the link between being a member of a minority ethnic group and a heightened risk of contracting and experiencing serious outcomes from COVID-19 is not direct. Looking across evidence from Scotland, England and across the UK, a number of mediating factors were identified, including:

- **Socio-economic circumstance** – Minority ethnic people remain more likely to be in poverty than the majority White Scottish population^{64,65}. Data from the ONS and the PHE analysis confirmed the strong association between economic disadvantage and COVID-19 diagnoses, incidence and severe disease.⁶⁶
- Research suggests that individuals from minority ethnic groups are more likely to have had to **work outside of their home during the national lockdown**,

⁶¹ Lally, Clare (2020) 'Impact of COVID-19 on different ethnic minority groups', [Impact of COVID-19 on different ethnic minority groups - POST \(parliament.uk\)](#)

⁶² Other Asian: all ethnicities from Asia that do not fall under Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi are grouped under Other Asian.

⁶³ [Deaths involving coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in Scotland, Report \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶⁴ Kelly, M. (2016) Poverty and Ethnicity: Key Messages for Scotland. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p. 8. [Poverty and ethnicity: key messages for Scotland \(cpag.org.uk\)](#)

⁶⁵ Netto, G., Sosenko, F. and Bramley, G. (2011) Poverty and Ethnicity in Scotland: Review of the Literature and Datasets. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. [Poverty and ethnicity in Scotland: Review of the literature and datasets \(jrf.org.uk\)](#)

⁶⁶ Lally, Clare (2020) 'Impact of COVID-19 on different ethnic minority groups', [Impact of COVID-19 on different ethnic minority groups - POST \(parliament.uk\)](#)

and are more likely to **work in occupations with a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure**, such as health and social care.^{67,68,69}

- COVID-19 disparities between different minority ethnic groups may be due to **reduced access to healthcare**. Analyses by the Institute for Public Policy Research indicate that in England the ten most deprived authorities have experienced 15% of all public health budget cuts in the past 5 years. According to Census data, many of these areas are more ethnically diverse than the population average.⁷⁰
- **Effects of lockdown** - according to The Runnymede Trust, people from Bangladeshi (43%) and Black African⁷¹ groups (38%) were most likely to report loss of income since COVID-19, compared with 22% of White people. Those from Black and minority ethnic groups were also more likely to have used savings for day-to-day spending (14%) compared with those from White British backgrounds (8%).^{72,73}

In addition, Keys and colleagues highlighted that, when considering health inequalities and potential ethnicity-related vulnerabilities to COVID-19 in the UK, it is important to understand the historical context.⁷⁴ This is a key tenet of intersectionality. Previous global influenza pandemics and infectious diseases

⁶⁷ Haque, Zubaida; Becares, Laia; Treloar, Nick (2020), 'Over-Exposed and Under-Protected The Devastating Impact of COVID-19 on Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Great Britain', [The Runnymede Trust | Over-Exposed and Under-Protected](#)

⁶⁸ Public Health England (2020), 'Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups', [Beyond the Data: Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on BAME Communities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶⁹ The Institute for Fiscal Studies (2021), 'Are some ethnic groups more vulnerable to COVID-19 than others?'. [Are some ethnic groups more vulnerable to COVID-19 than others? | Inequality: the IFS Deaton Review](#)

⁷⁰ Thomas, Chris (2019), 'Hitting the poorest worst? How public health cuts have been experienced in England's most deprived communities', [Hitting the poorest worst? How public health cuts have been experienced in England's most deprived communities | IPPR](#)

⁷¹ This is the terminology used with The Runnymede Report, rather than which is used by the Scottish Government.

⁷² These findings are based on the findings of a survey conducted by ICM Unlimited on behalf of the race equality think tank Runnymede Trust. ICM interviewed a sample of 2,585 adults living in Great Britain aged 18+ using its online omnibus service between 3 and 17 June 2020. In addition, a 'boost' sample of 538 black and minority ethnic (BME) adults was conducted, taking the overall sample of BME respondents to 750. To ensure a representative sample, demographic quotas were set, and the data has been weighted to the profile of all adults in Great Britain aged 18+.

⁷³ Haque, Zubaida; Becares, Laia; Treloar, Nick (2020), 'Over-Exposed and Under-Protected The Devastating Impact of COVID-19 on Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Great Britain', [The Runnymede Trust | Over-Exposed and Under-Protected](#)

⁷⁴ Keys, Clare; Nanyakkara, Gowri; Onyejekwe, Chisa; Kumar Sah, Rajeeb; Wright, Toni (2021), 'Health Inequalities and Ethnic Vulnerabilities During COVID-19 in the UK: A Reflection on the PHE Reports', *Feminist Legal Studies*, (29), 107 – 118

epidemics have clearly shown a clear association between poverty and increased transmission of infectious diseases.^{75,76}

The context of racism and discrimination experienced by minority ethnic communities, particularly minority ethnic key workers, is vital to understanding health risks, exposure risk and disease progression risk. Issues of stigma with COVID-19 were identified as negatively impacting health seeking behaviours. Fear of diagnosis and death from COVID-19 was identified as negatively impacting how minority ethnic groups took up opportunities to get tested and their likelihood of presenting early for treatment and care. For many minority ethnic groups, lack of trust in NHS services and health care treatment resulted in their reluctance to seek care on a timely basis, and late presentation with disease.⁷⁷

The Scottish Government established an Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity (ERG) in response to reports that some minority ethnic groups are at risk of experiencing disproportionate effects of COVID-19. In September 2020, the ERG published advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government in relation to data, evidence, risk and systemic issues.⁷⁸ This highlighted that **“vulnerabilities to COVID-19 are consistent with an established pattern in which ‘intersections between socioeconomic status, ethnicity and racism intensify inequalities in health for ethnic groups’”**⁷⁹, and suggested a range of institutional and systemic factors that could be driving this increased vulnerability among minority ethnic groups including:

- Differential exposures to COVID-19, due to occupation exposure, income and housing issues faced by those seeking asylum, living conditions, poverty,

⁷⁵ Crenshaw, Kimberle Williams (2020) Intersectionality matters: under the blacklight: history rinsed and repeated [Podcast]. 28 April 2020. [Stream 14. Under the Blacklight: History Rinsed and Repeated by Intersectionality Matters with Kimberlé Crenshaw | Listen online for free on SoundCloud](#)

⁷⁶ Quinn, Sandra, C., and Kumar Supriya (2014) Health inequalities and infectious disease epidemics: a challenge for global health security. *Biosecurity and bioterrorism: biodefense strategy, practice, and science*. 12 (5): 263–273.

⁷⁷ Public Health England (2020), ‘Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups’, [Beyond the Data: Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on BAME Communities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#), p. 7 - 8

⁷⁸ Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity (2020) ‘Initial advice & recommendations on systemic issues’, [Systemic+Issues+and+Risk+-+Initial+Advice+and+Recommendations+from+the+Expert+Reference+Group+on+COVID-19+and+Ethnicity+\(002\).pdf](#)

⁷⁹ Ibid

racism and discrimination, and a lack of understanding of Scotland's ethnic diversity.

- Differential vulnerabilities due to health inequalities.
- Differential access to treatment and other forms of support, including a greater risk to adverse outcomes even after hospitalisation, barriers to accessing NHS services among migrants, and experiences of discrimination when accessing health services.⁸⁰

Spotlight Example Three: Understanding the experiences of women in STEM

In 2019, Equate Scotland commissioned research using an intersectional approach to understand the experiences of women who have worked or were working in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and the built environment, as well as women who are currently studying these subjects in further or higher education.⁸¹ The research was carried out by Talat Yaqoob and Sayana Duenas. The aim of the research was to find out more about women's experiences of multiple discriminations, and to provide disaggregated data on these experiences based on other characteristics to understand differences between women.

The research comprised of a national survey with 461 women and focus groups with 13 women who were from minority ethnic backgrounds, had caring responsibilities and/or were disabled. The women were involved in the research design by running a test survey with 50 women and redesigning the survey based on that feedback. In addition, online focus groups were used were used to increase accessibility for women in remote areas of Scotland, disabled women and those with caring responsibilities.

The research found that women with intersecting protected characteristics, including disabled women, LGBT women, minority ethnic women, women with caring responsibilities and women aged over 35, face a number of barriers in STEM. These included:

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Equate Scotland (2020), 'Women in STEM: An Intersectional Analysis of Multiple Discriminations', [Women-in-STEM-report-2.pdf \(equatescotland.org.uk\)](https://equatescotland.org.uk/Women-in-STEM-report-2.pdf)

- **Discrimination and harassment.** 60% of respondents had experienced sexism in the workplace or in their place of education. 1 in 3 has also experienced ageism, and 1 in 6 had experienced discrimination related to caring responsibilities or maternity.
- 1 in 3 women **did not feel confident in reporting experiences of exclusion or discrimination to their employers.** Within this 50% of disabled women, 50% of minority ethnic women and 50% of LGBT women stated that they did not feel confident reporting these experiences to their employer.
- 64% of women **did not feel enough was being done to create inclusive workplaces or education institutions.** Within these over 80% of minority ethnic, 70% of women aged over 35, 74% of women with caring responsibilities, 90% of disabled women and over 80% of LGBT women who participated in the survey did not believe that enough was being done to create inclusive workplaces or education institutions.
- Over half of women stated that **efforts to support women in STEM were not fully inclusive of women who experienced multiple discriminations.** Within this almost 60% of women aged over 35, over 60% of women with caring responsibilities, 77% of disabled women, over 60% of minority ethnic women, and over 60% of LGBT women felt that efforts to support women in STEM were not fully inclusive of women who experienced multiple discriminations.

Spotlight Example Four: Understanding the experiences of disabled people when accessing services

Inclusion Scotland⁸², one of Scotland's leading disabled people's organisations, carried out research to explore the experiences of disabled people with intersectional protected characteristics when accessing services. The research was co-produced in partnership with disabled people, and was led by a group of disabled people with lived experience of intersectional discrimination. It is worth noting that this is small-scale piece of research which is not representative of all equality groups, or indeed of all disabled people.

⁸² Inclusion Scotland (2020), 'Services for Who? The experiences of disabled people with other characteristics when accessing services', [Services-for-who-final-report-1.pdf \(drilluk.org.uk\)](https://drilluk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Services-for-who-final-report-1.pdf)

A mixed methods approach was taken, comprising:

- A literature review.
- A survey on experiences of accessing leisure services, public services and housing services. The survey was distributed via Inclusion Scotland's network and received 96 responses.
- Interviews with 13 disabled people carried out in locations across Scotland.
- An online focus group for members of the co-production group to contribute their ideas on the recommendations that should be included in the report.

The research found that:

- Disabled people with other characteristics experienced **distinct barriers when accessing services**, and attributed unfair treatment experienced when accessing services to their intersectional identity, including a denial of choice, control and person-centred services.
- **Negative attitudes** were the main reason why disabled people with intersectional identities experienced forms of unfair treatment, including negative assumptions, lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of service providers.
- **Service providers understand the need for person-centred services but are not always able to deliver these.** Whilst the term intersectionality was not as familiar, discussions around person-centeredness included an awareness of the need to consider the whole person including their different characteristics, relationships and life circumstances.

6. How can intersectionality be integrated throughout the analytical process?

Intersectionality has traditionally been applied in qualitative research to understand the lived experience of people in groups experiencing disadvantage. However, intersectionality can be used in both qualitative and quantitative research.⁸³ Recent years have seen a growing number of academic papers highlighting the importance of intersectional quantitative analysis across a number of disciplines.^{84,85} This section of the report outlines how intersectionality can be integrated throughout the analytical process, with a particular focus on addressing power imbalance in research; ensuring marginalised groups are reached, and data analysis approaches.

Adopting an intersectional approach within an analytical context involves a number of considerations in relation to the participant or respondent sample, the wider context that may influence inequality and the ways in which the diverse experiences of the group of interest will be captured. Analysts looking to utilise the techniques discussed should access further information in the cited references and listed in Section 8.

The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data recently produced resources on intersectional approaches to data.⁸⁶ They set out that **“Intersectional approaches to data identify inequality within and between groups of people based on the way multiple facets of an individual’s identify interact. They ensure that data contributes to the reduction of inequality - which includes using intersectionality as a lens through which to examine data practices, processes, and institutions reflectively”**.⁸⁷ With this in mind, they provide five

⁸³ Winker, G., & Degele, N. (2011). Intersectionality as multi-level analysis: Dealing with social inequality. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 18(1), 51-66.

⁸⁴ Bauer, G. R., & Scheim, A. I. (2019) Methods for analytic intercategory intersectionality in quantitative research: Discrimination as a mediator of health inequalities

⁸⁵ Else-Quest, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2016). Intersectionality in quantitative psychological research: II. Methods and techniques. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 319-336.

⁸⁶ Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (2021), 'Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data', [Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data \(data4sdgs.org\)](https://data4sdgs.org)

⁸⁷ [Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data \(data4sdgs.org\)](https://data4sdgs.org)

recommendations for implementing an intersectional approach to data, which are summarised in the box below.

The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data recommendations for governments and organisations implementing an intersectional approach to data:

- **Establish a commitment to centering the voices of individuals at the greatest risk of marginalisation or discrimination in all aspects of data systems and practice.** This means accepting that lived experience is a valid form of evidence of inequality or discrimination, and ensuring that those individuals who are most impacted by inequality or discrimination are included in processes to identify solutions, develop organisational projects and programmes, or create policy.
- **Promote equity across the entire data value chain.** For intersectional approaches, data must promote equity for people who face the greatest risk across data collection, publication, uptake and impact.
- **Ensure that institutional data systems are inclusive and safe.** Intersectional approaches work to make data systems more inclusive, including taking into account different kinds of data.
- **Engage data to increase context awareness and reduce inequality.** Intersectional approaches to data should be adopted by governments and organisations to improve the quality of life of people who have been affected by intersecting inequality.
- **Build inclusive data institutions.** High priority should be placed on diversity and inclusion in the workforce, and analysts should critically assess how elements of their own identity shapes the data they collect, analyse and use.

6.1 Embedding an intersectional approach to data

The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data⁸⁸ provides a number of tips for analysts looking to embed an intersectional approach to data in existing practice or design new intersectional data initiatives. They recommend establishing

⁸⁸ [JN 1286 IDC KP WhitePaper 24pp A4.pdf \(data4sdgs.org\)](#)

intersectional approaches to data in progressive stages as organisational expertise is established through:

- **Clarifying intent.** Agreeing aims and objectives for the intersectional approach to data, including priority areas of policy or practice.
- **Engaging stakeholders.** Collaborating with marginalised groups directly or organisations representing them.
- **Advocating for time and budget.** Perform a data gap analysis to determine what data is available and what data is needed.
- **Establishing roles and responsibilities.** Engage in capacity building across the organisation to increase knowledge and awareness of intersectional approaches to data.
- **Developing action plans.** Produce action plans to solidify commitment and operate as an accountability mechanism.

6.2 Posing critical questions

A number of resources suggest that analysts should pose a number of critical questions throughout the research process.^{89,90} For example, Cole suggested that analysts seek to answer three questions throughout at each stage of the research process:⁹¹

1. Who is included within this group or category?
2. What role does inequality play, including the privilege and power experienced by this group?
3. What are the similarities across groups that are often viewed as different?

The implications of Cole's three questions for each stage of the research process are presented in Table 4 below.

⁸⁹ Cole, Elizabeth R. (2009), 'Intersectionality and Research in Psychology', *American Psychologist*, 64(3), p. 170 -180, [Intersectionality-and-Research-in-Psychology.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](#), p. 171

⁹⁰ Hankivsky, O. (2014). Intersectionality 101. *The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, SFU*, 36.

⁹¹ Cole, Elizabeth R. (2009), 'Intersectionality and Research in Psychology', *American Psychologist*, 64(3), p. 170 -180, [Intersectionality-and-Research-in-Psychology.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](#), p. 171

Table 4: Cole’s critical questions and their implications for each stage of the research process⁹²

Research Stage	Who is included within this category?	What role does inequality play?	Where are the similarities?
Generation of hypotheses	Attuned to diversity within categories.	Literature review attends to social and historical contexts of inequality.	May be exploratory rather than hypothesis testing to discover similarities.
Sampling	Focuses on neglected groups.	Category memberships mark groups with unequal access to power and resources.	Includes diverse groups connected by common relationships to social and institutional power.
Operationalisation	Develops measures from the perspective of the group being studied.	If comparative, differences are conceptualised as stemming from structural inequality rather than as primarily individual-level differences	Views social categories in terms of individual and institutional practices rather than primarily as characteristics of individuals.
Analysis	Attends to diversity within a group and may be conducted separately for each group studied.	Tests for both similarities and differences.	Interest not limited to differences.
Interpretation of findings	No group’s findings are interpreted to represent a universal or normative experience.	Differences are interpreted in light of groups’ structural positions.	Sensitivity to nuanced variations across groups is maintained even when similarities are identified.

⁹² Ibid

Likewise, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data⁹³ argue that equity is promoted across the entire data value chain by posing critical questions such as:

- **Data collection:** Who has been included in identifying what data to collect and how to collect it?
- **Data publication:** Who is doing the analysis and what do they know about intersecting inequalities?
- **Data uptake:** How can data be combined and used to tell a story of intersecting inequality and influence policy?
- **Data impact:** How has inequality been reduced and how do we measure this?

The remainder of this section provides an overview of the available literature to suggest how an intersectional approach could practicably be applied through the research process to understand structural inequality, and monitor and evaluate policy.

6.3. Addressing the power imbalance in research

6.3.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an important part of conducting intersectional research; a researcher should ask themselves questions about their own social positions, values, assumptions, interests and experiences and how these can shape the research process, as well as putting the research into context.⁹⁴ Regarding these principles, Grabe has highlighted that any intersectional research, whether it be qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, requires this sort of critical self-reflexivity which has historically been more common in qualitative research.⁹⁵

⁹³ Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (2021), 'Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data', [Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data \(data4sdgs.org\)](https://data4sdgs.org)

⁹⁴ Christoffersen, Ashlee (2017), *Intersectional Approaches to equality research and data, Research and data briefing 2 Intersectional approaches to equality research and data.pdf (ecu.ac.uk)*, p. 5

⁹⁵ Grabe, Shelly (2020), 'Research Methods in the Study of Intersectionality in Psychology: Examples Informed by a Decade of Collaborative Work With Majority Women's Grassroots Activism', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11

Abrams and colleagues argue that practices such as reflexive journaling (i.e., written systematic self-awareness) and bracketing (i.e., identification and suspension of researcher biases) have been useful in helping researchers understand the influence of their personal identities and associated biases on the research process, including study conceptualising, participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.⁹⁶ Reflexive journaling involves a researcher keeping a written record of their research process where they reflect on what they did, thought and felt throughout the research process. The purpose of bracketing is to mitigate the negative effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to a research project. In undertaking the process of bracketing the researcher should suspend their beliefs, assumptions, biases and previous experience in order to see and describe a phenomenon. This works hand-in-hand with reflexive journaling, where a researcher is able to fully reflect on what their preconceived belief, assumptions and biases are.

For researchers who do share backgrounds or experiences with participants, employing “caring reflexivity” by opening dialogue with participants about power imbalances and concerns during the study can enhance trust and build rapport.⁹⁷ Where this is not possible the researcher should familiarise themselves with some of the issues described by people with that identity, and to acknowledge to participants that they do not share their identity.⁹⁸

6.3.2. Public involvement in research

While nearly all research involves participants and participation of some sort, public involvement in research is distinct because the contributions of researchers and community member participants are viewed as equally valuable, with each seen as having unique expertise throughout the research process.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Abrams, Jasmine; Tabaac, Ariella; Jung, Sarah; Else-Quest, Nicole (2020), ‘Considerations for Employing Intersectionality in Qualitative Health Research’, *Soc Sci Med* 258, p. 7

⁹⁷ Christoffersen, Ashlee (2017), *Intersectional Approaches to equality research and data, Research and data briefing 2. Intersectional approaches to equality research and data.pdf* (ecu.ac.uk), p. 5

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5

⁹⁹ Teixeira, Samantha; Augsberger, Astraea; Richards-Schuster, Katie; Sprague Martinez, Linda (2021), ‘Participatory Research Approaches with Youth: Ethics, Engagement and Meaningful Action’, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 68(1 – 2), p. 142 – 153, p. 144

Public involvement refers to the active involvement of people with lived experience in research projects and in research organisations.¹⁰⁰ This is distinct from more traditional research approaches in which people take part in a research study as ‘participants’ or ‘data subjects’ (e.g. being interviewed or answering questions about their experiences) and where information gathered through research is disseminated to people rather than with them. The National Institute for Health Research define public involvement as “research being carried out ‘with’ or ‘by’ members of the public rather than ‘to’, ‘about’ or ‘for’ them.”¹⁰¹

Public involvement can be a strong way to ensure that marginalised communities, such as those with intersecting protected characteristics, are actively engaged in research from conceptualisation through implementation and dissemination.¹⁰² Involving people with lived experience could take a number of forms, including through¹⁰³:

- Consultation
- Advisory or steering groups
- Public advisors
- Peer researchers
- Priority setting partnerships
- Co-production
- User-led research

Table 5 sets out ways in which people with lived experience of intersecting protected characteristics could be involved throughout the research process.

¹⁰⁰ INVOLVE (2016). *Public involvement in research: values and principles framework*, [Public involvement in research: values and principles framework – INVOLVE](#)

¹⁰¹ [Briefing notes for researchers - public involvement in NHS, health and social care research \(nhr.ac.uk\)](#)

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 44

¹⁰³ [INVOLVE Briefing Notes Apr 2012.pdf](#)

Table 5: Ways that people with lived experience could be involved in different stages of a research project.¹⁰⁴

Research stage	Public involvement
Identifying and prioritising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting research priorities and aims. • Consulting with organisations who represent those with lived experience to develop research questions. • Holding a consultation event or workshop. • Carrying out a scoping study.
Commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving people with lived experience in drafting specifications and evaluating tenders. • Asking organisations representing those with lived experience to commission the research. • Build in public involvement approaches as a requirement of the tender. • Involve people with lived experience in the ongoing contract management of the research, including through project advisory groups or direct contract management.
Research design and management	<p>Consult or collaborate with people with lived experience and/or organisations representing people with lived experience to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop research questions and proposals. • Develop recruitment materials and data collection tools. • Check feasibility of research methods. • Identify additional public involvement opportunities.
Carrying out the research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation on project steering groups. • Contribute to literature reviews.

¹⁰⁴ [INVOLVE Briefing Notes Apr 2012.pdf](#); Brady, Louca-Mai; Graham, Berni (2021) 'Public involvement in social research'

Research stage	Public involvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect data through peer research, including by co-facilitating focus groups or interviews with peers and other stakeholders. • Contribute to data analysis, including by identifying priorities for analysis, identifying themes in qualitative data.
Reporting and dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to report drafting. • Producing other outputs to disseminate findings, including accessible summaries, blog posts, videos, social media posts. • Sharing findings with their networks. • Co-presenting findings at events. • Contribute to the development of dissemination plans.

It is important to note, however, that when public involvement is attempted without equity between researcher and those with lived experience there is a risk that it could be seen as tokenistic and could perpetuate any pre-existing power imbalances. Talat Yaqoob¹⁰⁵, campaigner and researcher with a speciality in intersectional approaches, identified six foundations that are key to public involvement in research:

1. Trust in the public
2. Financial resources
3. Adequate time allocated
4. Clarity and accessibility
5. Redistribution of power
6. The right techniques should be used for the right project

¹⁰⁵ Talat Yaqoob , 'Delivering participative and lived experience led research', Presentation to Scottish Government 14 September 2021

INVOLVE set out a series of values and principles for effective public involvement¹⁰⁶:

- **Respect.** Researchers, research organisations and the public respect each other's roles.
- **Support.** All have access to practical and organisational support to involve and be involved.
- **Transparency.** All are clear and open about the aims and scope of involvement.
- **Responsiveness.** Researchers and research organisations actively respond to the input of public members involved in research.
- **Fairness of opportunity.** Relevant groups should be given equal opportunity and efforts are made to ensure involvement is inclusive and seldom heard voices are represented.
- **Accountability.** All are accountable for their involvement in research and to the people, communities and groups affected by the research.

6.3.3. Examples of public involvement in research

This section provides some examples of public involvement in research to illustrate the principles outlined above. Note, however, that whilst public involvement in research is key to engaging with the concept of intersectionality, the examples provided below did not necessarily explicitly set out to explore disadvantage through an intersectional lens.

Talat Yaqoob identified examples of effective participatory community research. One such example is provided in the box below.

¹⁰⁶ INVOLVE (2016). *Public involvement in research: values and principles framework*. Available from: <http://www.invo.org.uk/posttypepublication/public-involvement-in-researchvalues-and-principles-framework/>

Social action during the coronavirus pandemic

This research, undertaken by The Collective Consultancy¹⁰⁷, aimed to better understand the role of “social action”; how people come together to improve their lives and the implications of this for creating a fairer Scotland. The COVID-19 pandemic was identified as an opportunity to learn about informal social action in response to a crisis.

In order to explore social action community research was employed, which focuses on research being fully lead by grassroots community members. 18 community researchers were recruited (based on the type of social action they delivered and their geography, to ensure wide representation across Scotland), and trained in order to build skills on how to develop survey questions, how to conduct research, survey ethics and distribution. Community researchers were paid £200 for their time and input.

Community research usually involves the method of the research, the research questions, the delivery, the analysis and write-up being fully conducted by community members. This project, however, already had pre-defined research questions, so a pre-made survey of nine questions was created with three additional questions for each community researcher to develop themselves, which were relevant to their own communities and which investigated issues they felt were pertinent to their local area.

Key findings included:

- The most common social action efforts were food distribution/collection, grocery or prescription pick-ups for neighbours and befriending or “checking-in” with isolating/shielding neighbours.
- 44% of participants were also getting social action support (e.g. through a foodbank).
- 51% of participants felt there was an increase in community frustration at ongoing inequality.

¹⁰⁷ Together we help (2021), ‘ Social action during the coronavirus pandemic: Learning from the crisis to help build forward better’, [social-action-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-report.pdf \(nhsggc.org.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/communities/social-action-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-report.pdf)

- 64% felt there was a reduction in stigma in coming forward for support.
- Participants emphasised the need to not view social action through “rose-tinted glasses” but to understand that many social action interventions are a direct result of poverty, exclusion and inequality.
- Respondents explained that they felt empowered by supporting their communities but equally disempowered by the impact of inequality and feeling that their communities were being overlooked.

Co-production was carried out by the Scottish Government to develop the social security system in Scotland through Social Security Scotland’s Experience Panels:

Social Security Scotland – Co-designing the Social Security Charter and Measurement Framework

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 makes provision for the production of a Charter and Measurement Framework, to be made in consultation with people with lived experience of the social security system.¹⁰⁸ A group of diverse people with a range of conditions and experiences (the Core Group) – made up mostly of ‘Experience Panel’ members – have taken part in workshops with Scottish Government analysts to create the charter, based on the principles in The Act.

The co-design of the Charter Measurement Framework was undertaken between March and August 2019. Scottish Government officials held:

- Seven full-day workshops with Core Group 2, including an advice and discussion session between the group and the Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS)
- Two meetings with representatives from stakeholder groups
- Two meetings with SCoSS

Crucial elements of the co-design process included:

- **Enabling participation:** breaking down barriers to participation through, for example, using sign language interpreters and audio describers where necessary.

¹⁰⁸ [Social Security Charter measurement framework: co-design process - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-charter-measurement-framework-co-design-process/pages/108.aspx)

All written materials used by the group were made available in accessible formats, for example, large print or different colour contrast, where needed.

- **Power:** group decision making and ownership about the process of producing the Charter Measurement Framework and the processes' outputs.

- **Knowledge: capacity building** with participants; **guests**, including policy colleagues and minister, to inform group of latest developments/answer questions; **knowledge exchange** – recognising lived experience as expertise.

6.4 Ensuring marginalised groups are reached

Adopting an intersectional approach to analysis requires that people with different intersecting identities, particularly from multiple marginalised groups, be included in research so that their voices are heard.¹⁰⁹

Practical steps that can be taken to aid diverse research recruitment, including:

- Considering the timing of the research recruitment. For example, where intersections of religion or belief are relevant, this could involve avoiding significant religious and cultural days when scheduling research.
- Using fully accessible venues that are appealing and well located for your target groups.
- Asking participants in advance if they have any particular dietary or access requirements that you may be able to accommodate; considering diverse dietary requirements and preferences when providing refreshments (for example provision of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, specifying that any meat served be halal).
- Considering the provision of incentives and expenses to value research participants' time and contribution.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Else-Quest, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2016). Intersectionality in quantitative psychological research: II. Methods and techniques. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 319-336.

¹¹⁰ Christoffersen, Ashlee (2017), *Intersectional Approaches to equality research and data*, [Research and data briefing 2 Intersectional approaches to equality research and data.pdf](https://www.ecu.ac.uk/research-and-data-briefing-2-intersectional-approaches-to-equality-research-and-data.pdf) ([ecu.ac.uk](https://www.ecu.ac.uk)), p. 5

- Equality monitoring to ensure an appropriate range of participants, as well as to document who the research participants were. Monitoring may be done at different stages: during research recruitment, to ensure a diverse range of the target group is registering to participate, or to target underrepresented groups if not; and at the point of the research being conducted.¹¹¹
- Ensuring that you are not overburdening the same groups or individuals. Where there are multiple research projects intending to reach groups with the same intersecting identities, try to join up to minimise burden.

6.4.1. Sampling techniques

The sampling techniques used in research are important considerations when taking an intersectional approach. A completely random sampling approach or use of a sampling frame designed to be representative of a whole population may lead to problems with low sample size for lower-frequency groups in the population or among those who may be more reluctant to take part in research.

Insufficient sample size is a particular barrier to taking an intersectional approach so analysts should consider all available techniques and the implications. Analysis of data with small subsamples of certain groups has the potential to commit the “lumping error” in which samples of heterogeneous groups are treated as homogeneous because they are too small to be divided into appropriate subgroups (e.g. minority ethnic vs. White). It is noted, however, that there is sometimes no alternative where sample sizes are low so, in instances where this is considered inadequate to meet the requirement, alternative more targeted sampling techniques should be considered.¹¹²

Where random sampling will not provide a sufficiently large sample size to produce robust insights into the experiences of those with intersecting characteristics, sampling might take one of two forms:

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 6

¹¹² Else-Quest, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2016). Intersectionality in quantitative psychological research: II. Methods and techniques. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 319-336.

- **Stratified random sampling** for a between-group design¹¹³
- **Purposive, quota or snowball sampling** for between- or within-groups designs.

Stratified random sampling requires researchers to decide on the intersectional groups that will be considered in the research and then sample those groups to ensure equal numbers of individuals are included. Stratified random sampling is a method of sampling from a population whereby the population is divided into subgroups and individuals are randomly selected from the subgroups.¹¹⁴ Low-frequency groups may be best dealt with using stratified random sampling (e.g. minority ethnic groups).

Purposive, quota or snowball sampling may be the most useful for those applying an intersectional approach to qualitative research.¹¹⁵ This can be used to develop a sample that is representative or typical of the intersectional group of interest, through recruitment of participants through networks or by asking research participants to refer eligible peers.¹¹⁶ Purposive and quota sampling are similar as both strategies facilitate the identification of participants based on preselected criteria relevant to the research question. Purposive, quota or snowball sampling may be most effective if implemented as part of a wider public involvement approach to the research, as outlined earlier in this Section.

Respondent-driven sampling or snowball sampling, involves asking or incentivising participants to recruit additional participants. This can be particularly useful for targeting those with stigmatised or hidden identities.¹¹⁷ For example, the National LGBT Survey published by the UK Government Equalities Office in 2018, was an online survey which utilised respondent-driven sampling in order to access a large number of respondents. This was considered important given the lack of data on the LGBT population in national and administrative datasets. The survey achieved a sample of 108,100 responses by wide promotion by the Government Equalities

¹¹³ 'Between-group designs' refers to research that compares two or more groups of people (e.g. comparing women versus men).

¹¹⁴ [Stratified Random Sampling - SAGE Research Methods \(sagepub.com\)](#)

¹¹⁵ Abrams, Jasmine; Tabaac, Ariella; Jung, Sarah; Else-Quest, Nicole (2020), 'Considerations for Employing Intersectionality in Qualitative Health Research', *Soc Sci Med* 258, p. 9

¹¹⁶ [Purposive Sample - SAGE Research Methods \(sagepub.com\)](#)

¹¹⁷ Ibid

Office, stakeholders, at national LGBT pride events, via national media coverage and on social media.¹¹⁸

Respondent-driven sampling can also be strengthened by vocal support from a community leader, as they may provide guidance on effective recruitment techniques, help researchers establish trust with potential participants, and assist researchers in pre-emptively addressing concerns community members may have about the research project.¹¹⁹ However, respondent-driven sampling is biased toward inclusion of individuals with interrelations, which can potentially limit diversity of the sample and contribute to a greater likelihood of missing individuals who are not connected to the accessed social network.¹²⁰

Researchers may consider combining sampling approaches to minimise selection bias and related threats to the trustworthiness of data. Combining strategies (e.g., employing quota and snowball sampling online and in community-based settings) may better capture participants who are considered “hard to reach,” especially if the identities of the population of interest are hidden or associated with illegal activity (e.g., illicit drug use or sex work).¹²¹

6.5 Approaches to intersectional research design

There is no ‘one’ intersectional research approach. For example, looking across academic disciplines at the applications of intersectionality within quantitative research, McCall¹²² and Walby¹²³ distinguish between three main forms of intersectionality:

- **Anticategorical complexity:** deconstruction of analytical categories such as gender and race, and focuses attention on the ways in which concepts, terms and categories are constructed. Most commonly applied in historical and literary studies.

¹¹⁸ Government Equalities Office (2008), ‘National LGBT Survey: Summary Report’, [National LGBT Survey: Summary report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200000/national-lgbt-survey-summary-report.pdf), p. 7

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 10

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 10

¹²² McCall, Leslie (2005), ‘The Complexity of Intersectionality’, *Signs*, 30(3), pp. 1771-1800, [McCall \(2005\) The Complex of Intersectionality .pdf \(umich.edu\)](https://www.umich.edu/~lmcCall/papers/2005_TheComplexofIntersectionality.pdf)

¹²³ Walby, Sylvia (2007) ‘Complexity Theory, Systems Theory, and Multiple Intersecting Social Inequalities’, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 37(4): 449-470

- **Intracategorical complexity:** focuses on particular groups at neglected points of intersection. Case studies, ethnographic and narrative research methods are the primary focus.
- **Intercategorical complexity:** makes strategic use of categories and analyses relations of multiple inequalities between groups. This approach orientates itself towards the relationship between categories mainly in quantitative research. For example, modelling income-differences between fixed social groups. In this method, categories of interest are selected in advance.

Most research using quantitative methods or data analysis techniques has been intercategorical, generally describing inequalities across intersections, whereas qualitative research tends to be intracategorical.

In practice, when planning research, analysts often have to decide between within-groups designs, between-groups designs or some combination of the two. This is likewise reflected in the available intersectional research literature. Some studies use a within-group design (e.g. studying one intersectional group, such as disabled women) whereas other studies use a between groups design to sample and compare multiple groups, e.g. 2 (gender: women vs. men) by 2 (disability: disabled/non-disabled) design.¹²⁴ As a means to understand the experiences of those with intersecting characteristics, each of these designs have relative merits and disadvantages, which are described in the box below.

A **within-groups design** can provide a rich understanding about a specific intersectional group, offer new insights and lead to new research questions. However, a within-groups design is less informative to our understanding of how intersectional groups compare because of the exclusion of other intersections. This design assumes, but cannot test, how having multiple intersecting characteristics shapes experiences. Having a single group sample could increase the risk of overgeneralisation of research findings.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Else-Quest, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2016). Intersectionality in quantitative psychological research: II. Methods and techniques. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 319-336.

¹²⁵ Ibid

A **between-groups design** involves at least four comparing groups, such as disabled women vs. disabled men vs. non-disabled women vs. non-disabled men. More complex between-groups designs may involve comparing three or more characteristics, such as 2 (gender: women vs. men) x 2 (age: younger vs. older) x 2 (disability: disabled vs. non-disabled). However, depending on the research question(s) it may be appropriate to combine the within- and between-groups designs, such that variations in one category (e.g. disabled vs. non-disabled) are examined within one group (e.g. women).

6.6. Approaches to intersectional data analysis

There are few standard practices for intersectional statistical analysis, although several different approaches have been proposed.¹²⁶ A selection of these approaches are presented below. It is accepted that it may not be possible to apply all of these statistical techniques within the context of public sector analysis as result of limited sample sizes, resource and time constraints. However, it is important to explore a range of options in order to incorporate their principles where possible and relevant.

It is important to note that combining the use of lived experience research with important statistical analysis in the form of population surveys can be particularly helpful in determining how frequent the experiences of those with intersecting characteristics are, and also useful for identifying key areas for further research. Small sample sizes can hinder this analysis, but it is important that an analyst thinks creatively when faced with this issue. A solution, which is often employed by Scottish Government population surveys, can be to combine multiple years' worth of data in order to increase sample size, although it is important to note that is easier to achieve in some cases than others. For example, it is easier to achieve a good sample size when looking at sex by age (e.g. the experiences of young women) compared to looking at age by sexual orientation.

¹²⁶ [Intersectionality in quantitative research: A systematic review of its emergence and applications of theory and methods \(nih.gov\)](#)

6.6.1. Cross-tabulation analysis

Most work on study design or data analysis methods has been intercategorical, generally describing inequalities across intersections.¹²⁷ This is the approach most commonly adopted within public sector analysis in Scotland; quantitative applications of intersectionality within official or national statistics, and Scottish Government research publications, have tended to focus on presenting measures of central tendency of outcomes across two or more protected characteristics. Cross-tabulations are particularly useful if an analyst wants to explore the experiences of those with intersecting characteristics using existing data. For example, the Annual Population Survey, which provides statistics on Scotland's labour market, explores how the minority ethnic employment gap varies by gender, and by age. The minority ethnic employment gap is the gap in employment rates between the minority ethnic¹²⁸ and white populations. The research found that the minority ethnic employment gap was estimated at 13.2 percentage points for women and at 2.2 percentage points for men. In addition, in April 2020-March 2021, the minority ethnic employment gap was estimated to be largest for those aged 25 to 34 (16.7 percentage points); followed by ages 35 to 49 (14.4 percentage points), ages 16 to 24 (7.2* percentage points) and ages 50 to 64 (-8.3 percentage points, where the minority ethnic employment rate is higher than the white employment rate).¹²⁹

Cross tabulation tables are useful when analysing the relationship between two or more categorical variables, such as protected characteristics. For example, weekly statistics are released by Public Health Scotland on COVID-19 provides vaccine uptake statistics by age and ethnicity, ethnicity and health board, and SIMD decile, age and health board.¹³⁰ However, whilst cross tabulation tables are helpful in presenting descriptive statistics, inferential statistics are required to examine the

¹²⁷ [Intersectionality in quantitative research: A systematic review of its emergence and applications of theory and methods \(nih.gov\)](#)

* Estimates marked with an * indicate they are based on a small sample size which may be less precise and should be used with caution

¹²⁸ 'Minority ethnic' includes all categories outside the white population - 'Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups', 'Asian/Asian Scottish/Asian British', 'African', 'Caribbean or Black', 'Arab' or 'Other ethnic group'. 'White includes 'White Polish' and 'White Gypsy' who also suffer disadvantage

¹²⁹ Scottish Government (2021), 'Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions – Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2020/21', [Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2020/21 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹³⁰ [COVID-19 Statistical Report - 6 October 2021 - COVID-19 statistical report - Publications - Public Health Scotland](#)

relationships between variables within a sample and make generalisations about how these variables relate to the larger population. In addition, the documentation of inequality, even in finer intersectional detail, has been criticised by academics as it can serve to reinforce ideas of inherent differences between groups rather than to point towards actionable solutions.^{131,132}

6.6.2. Interactions within multiple regression models

According to Scott and Siltanen¹³³ it is potentially helpful to move beyond the descriptive approach outlined above to inferential techniques that test whether differences between groups are statistically significant.

One approach to analysing intersectionality is to use multiple regression.¹³⁴ Multiple regression allows analysts to model the relationship between several variables, such that several variables predict a change in an outcome.¹³⁵ Crucially, multiple regression allows analysts to investigate how variables interact to predict a change in an outcome. This allows analysts to take intersectionality into account in their inferential statistical analysis.

For example, an additive regression model, such as “Outcome = Disability + Gender + Sexual Orientation” is not an intersectional model. It can be used to understand the effects of one of the predictors (e.g. Disability) whilst holding the other variables constant (e.g. Gender and Sexual Orientation). However, this does not allow for intersectional analysis because it does not show the impact of individual characteristics when the others are allowed to vary.

To carry out intersectional analysis, it is key to include an interaction term within a multiple regression model. For example, “Outcome = Disability * Gender * Sexual

¹³¹ Bauer, G. R., & Scheim, A. I (2019). ‘Methods for analytic intercategory intersectionality in quantitative research: Discrimination as a mediator of health inequalities’, [Methods for analytic intercategory intersectionality in quantitative research: Discrimination as a mediator of health inequalities \(researchgate.net\)](#)

¹³² Bauer GR (2014), ‘Incorporating intersectionality theory into population health research methodology: challenges and the potential to advance health equity.’ *Soc Sci Med*, [Incorporating intersectionality theory into population health research methodology: Challenges and the potential to advance health equity - ScienceDirect](#)

¹³³ Scott, Nicholas; Siltanen, Janet (2016), ‘Intersectionality and quantitative methods: assessing regression from a feminist perspective’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, [Intersectionality and Quantitative Methods \(researchgate.net\)](#), p. 2

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 2

¹³⁵ [multiple-regression-ANOVA.pdf \(open.ac.uk\)](#)

Orientation”. With an interaction term, it is possible to answer the question of how the outcome changes for different combinations of variables.

An example of the use of interactions within multiple regression to identify intersectional inequality is available within the Sightsavers case study prepared by the Inclusive Data Charter.¹³⁶

Sightsavers is an international organization that collaborates with partners in developing countries to eradicate preventable blindness and promote equal opportunity for disabled people. In 2019, Sightsavers sought to identify the social inequalities that influence access to treatment for cataracts in Kogi, Nigeria. After cleaning and preparing the data, Sightsavers tested for univariate associations, that is specific associations between two variables only, identifying factors to examine based on their background knowledge.

However, in order to produce an intersectional analysis the Sightsavers team adopted a multivariable method in which they developed a regression model by combining factors that they believed would have a relationship with the outcomes: age, sex, wealth, and disability. Since they approached the outcomes as binary, they chose to use a logistic regression model, which provided an output including odds ratios describing the strength of effect of each factor and a p-value representing the likelihood that the observed relationship occurred by chance.

The team went one step further in their exploration of intersectional effects and decided to test a pre-specified hypothesis that a particular sub-group of participants had a specific level of risk linked to a specific combination of their identity factors. In this situation, they added an interaction term to their model which allowed them to explore whether the specific effects of disability were moderated by gender or age.

The Sightsavers case study highlights a number of key considerations for analysts undertaking an analysis of interactions within multiple regression models:

- When using multiple regression models analysts should question where data comes from and whether individual characteristics were measured appropriately in the first place.

¹³⁶ [JN 1286 IDC KP Sightsavers CaseStudy.pdf \(data4sdgs.org\)](#)

- Analysts should question their results and whether multivariable models reflect the logical mechanism and pre-existing evidence behind observed relationships when analysing and interpreting data.¹³⁷

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to this approach, which are represented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Advantages and disadvantages of interactions within multiple regression models

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>This is standard multiple regression so represents a commonly used technique to test for statistical significance.¹³⁸</p>	<p>Interaction effects are not estimated in isolation from the main effects of the variables from which they derive, but rather the significance of interaction is contingent on the size of the main effects (e.g. race and gender). In addition, categories such as race and gender might exert effects that contradict or cancel each other out, reflecting buffering or moderation of disadvantage by advantage.¹³⁹</p>
<p>Interaction terms are useful because they help identify multiplicative effects that may characterise inequalities beyond additive effects.¹⁴⁰</p>	<p>Interpreting interaction terms can be challenging when both main and interaction effects are included in the model, especially with higher-order interactions of three or more predictors.¹⁴¹</p>

¹³⁷ Ibid

¹³⁸ Scott, Nicholas; Siltanen, Janet (2016), 'Intersectionality and quantitative methods: assessing regression from a feminist perspective', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, [Intersectionality and Quantitative Methods \(researchgate.net\)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309211111), p. 2

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Ibid

Advantages	Disadvantages
Three-way interactions bring a more nuanced perspective of intersectionality, especially when a contextual variable (such as characteristics of a local labour market) is included as a component of the interaction. ¹⁴²	There may be difficulties understanding the impact of contextual variables when they are conceived as independent variables in the regression model – context is treated not as its own level of analysis but as an individual-level characteristic when presented in the higher-order interaction terms. ¹⁴³
	Critics ¹⁴⁴ argue that the inclusion of statistical interactions is not sufficient for an approach to be considered intersectional; researchers must also consider the meaning and underlying processes of the interactions.
	Moderate amounts of data, skills, and resources required to undertake this type of analysis. ¹⁴⁵

6.6.3. Comparing multiple regressions run within different contextual variables

Scott and Siltanen¹⁴⁶ argue that in order to achieve a deeper appreciation of contextual variations of complex inequalities “we must move beyond the analysis of main effects, control variables and interaction effects afforded by a single multiple regression model.” They suggest running separate regression models within different contextual variables to compare relevant axes of inequality within and across

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ Ibid

¹⁴⁴ Cole, Elizabeth R. (2009), ‘Intersectionality and Research in Psychology’, *American Psychologist*, 64(3), p. 170 -180, [Intersectionality-and-Research-in-Psychology.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](#)

¹⁴⁵ [JN 1286 IDC KP Sightsavers CaseStudy.pdf \(data4sdgs.org\)](#)

¹⁴⁶ Scott, Nicholas; Siltanen, Janet (2016), ‘Intersectionality and quantitative methods: assessing regression from a feminist perspective’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, Intersectionality and Quantitative Methods (researchgate.net)*

contexts.¹⁴⁷ As set out in Section 3 above, an understanding that the inequality conferred by intersecting identities varies according to context, is key to the concept of intersectionality.

Contextual variables could, for example, be the school, city, workplace or neighbourhood which influences the relative advantages and disadvantages experienced by those with intersecting characteristics. Within data analysis, it is possible to begin to take into account the effects of context by running multiple separate regression models within different contexts (e.g. schools) and comparing the predictive effect of the interacting characteristics (e.g. race and sex) on the outcome variable (e.g. educational attainment scores).

However, an inspection of the outputs of each of these models, would not provide a way to statistically test whether there are any statistically significant differences between the intersecting effects of gender and race between these contexts (in our example, schools).

To test for a significant difference due to context, researchers require an integrated dataset so that separate regression equations can be estimated for the categories of contextually-relevant variables and the average difference in outcome variables across the different contexts can be partitioned into two parts.

Table 6, below, demonstrates the main advantages and disadvantages of this method.

Table 6: Advantages and disadvantages of comparing multiple regressions run within different contextual variables.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Separate models allow regression coefficients for additive and multiplicative effects to vary, which helps the researcher explore and determine, rather than assume a priori, what focal and contributing factors are	Like statistical interactions within multiple regression, this approach has the limitation that it is fundamentally based on data measured exclusively at the individual level of analysis. These models ¹⁴⁹ , therefore, do not incorporate

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 12

¹⁴⁹ Ibid

Advantages	Disadvantages
operating in tandem to produce a unique configuration of inequality. ¹⁴⁸	into the analysis variation that corresponds directly with the characteristics of contexts themselves. ¹⁵⁰

6.6.4. Multilevel Models

Conventional regression models ignore that people are ‘nested’ within contexts that influence the extent to which various characteristics confer advantage or disadvantage, such as neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces or localised labour markets.¹⁵¹ Multilevel models recognise that outcomes are likely to be a combination of an individual’s characteristics and the social context in which they are embedded. Multilevel models have the feature of incorporating contextual information differently for each individual within a single model.

A multilevel model uses a system of equations that identifies values of an outcome variable as a function of explanatory variables for individual characteristics (level 1) and explanatory variables for context level characteristics (level 2).¹⁵² For example, a multilevel model would allow analysts to examine differences in educational attainment scores according to the intersecting protected characteristics of race and sex accounting for differences between teachers and schools.

Scott and Siltanen argue that multilevel models offer an analytical approach that most closely matches the features of intersectional analysis highlighted in the literature, including attention to context, identifying relevant dimensions of inequality and accounting for the complex, multidimensional structure of inequality. Table 7 below demonstrates some of the main advantages and disadvantages of multilevel models.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 16

¹⁵¹ [Multilevel modelling \(apa.org\)](https://www.apa.org)

¹⁵² Scott, Nicholas; Siltanen, Janet (2016), ‘Intersectionality and quantitative methods: assessing regression from a feminist perspective’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, Intersectionality and Quantitative Methods (researchgate.net)*, p. 16

Table 7: Advantages and disadvantages of multilevel models

Advantages	Disadvantages
Allows researchers to explore how contextual characteristics reconfigure individual level relationships through the inclusion of a cross-level interaction. ¹⁵³	Multilevel models have stringent dataset requirements: the researcher needs to be able to situate every respondent within theoretically significant contexts and in turn have access to information on all relevant contextual variables included in the analysis. ¹⁵⁴
	There are likely to be challenges relating to weighting estimates and having a sufficient sample size. ¹⁵⁵
	Critics ¹⁵⁶ of using interaction effects to achieve intersectional models argue that such an approach does not capture the nuance of intersectionality. Social categories, such as race and gender, are confounded in individuals; this means that any survey question that asks participants to report whether their experiences were a function of one category membership rather than another may be eliciting flawed data. ¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 17

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 22

¹⁵⁶ Cole, Elizabeth R. (2009), 'Intersectionality and Research in Psychology', *American Psychologist*, 64(3), p. 170 -180, [Intersectionality-and-Research-in-Psychology.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](#), p. 177

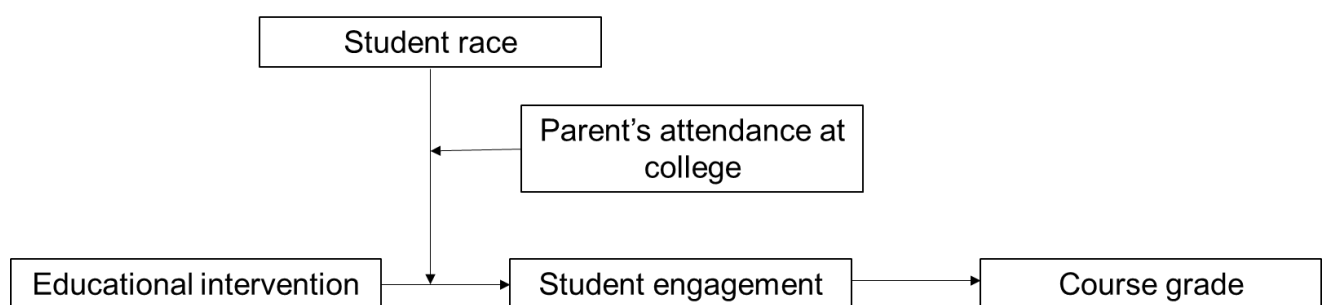
¹⁵⁷ Ibid

6.6.5. Moderated Mediation

Else-Quest and Hyde present moderated mediation as another statistical technique that could be used for intersectional analysis.¹⁵⁸ Moderated mediation tests whether the effect of the influence of a mediating variable (M) on the relationship between an independent variable (X) and an outcome variable (Y) is moderated (i.e. modified) by a fourth variable (Z).

Else-Quest and Hyde reference intersectional research carried out by Harackiewicz and colleagues¹⁵⁹ that investigated the intersection between race and social class using a moderated mediation model to test the effectiveness of an intervention among students taking a biology course. As depicted in Figure 3, the mediation model examined whether the effectiveness of the intervention on attainment (course grade) was mediated by student's engagement in the course (as measured by the length of their essays). Crucially, the model examined whether the effectiveness of the intervention on students' engagement was moderated by the effects of the students' race and whether the students were the first generation in their family to attend college. The use of moderated mediation in this research revealed that first generation minority ethnic students showed the greatest gains resulting from the intervention on engagement and course grades.

Figure 3. Example of a moderated mediation based on research carried out by Harackiewicz and colleagues. This diagram based on Figure 1 in Else-Quest and Hyde's paper.



¹⁵⁸ Else-Quest, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2016). Intersectionality in quantitative psychological research: II. Methods and techniques. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 319-336.

¹⁵⁹ Harackiewicz, J. M., Canning, E. A., Tibbetts, Y., Priniski, S. J., & Hyde, J. S. (2015). Closing achievement gaps with a utility-value intervention: Disentangling race and social class. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. doi:10.1037/pspp0000075

Table 8 below demonstrates some of the main advantages and disadvantages of moderated mediation.

Table 8: Advantages and disadvantages of moderated mediation

Advantages	Disadvantages
Allows analysts to examine whether the effectiveness of an intervention on an outcome is moderated by intersecting identities. This has the potential to be useful when monitoring and evaluating policies. ¹⁶⁰	Where mediation models include a moderator variable, it is essential that there is a large enough sample size in each subgroup of the moderator variable. As with other inferential techniques, analysts should ensure that they have sufficient 'statistical power' to detect the effects of interest. ¹⁶¹
	Data about the moderating equality characteristics is required from each person participating in the intervention. ¹⁶²
	Moderated mediation favours longitudinal research designs in which data on an outcome variable is obtained following the implementation of an intervention. ¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Else-Quest, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2016). Intersectionality in quantitative psychological research: II. Methods and techniques. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 319-336.

¹⁶¹ Ibid

¹⁶² Ibid

¹⁶³ Ibid

7. Conclusions

This report has explored the concept of intersectionality and its use in policymaking and analysis. Five key considerations are presented below which policymakers and analysts should take into account when taking an intersectional approach.

Consideration 1 - contextualisation: When taking an intersectional approach to policymaking and analysis, alongside taking account of combinations of characteristics that shape experiences, these intersecting identities should be contextualised and understood within the systems and structures of power. This should be central to the ways in which policies are designed, implemented and evaluated to ensure those with lived experience are taken into account.

Consideration 2 - reflexivity: In order to take an intersectional approach policymakers and analysts should regularly consider their own membership of interconnected categories and practice reflexivity.¹⁶⁴ This will allow them to better understand how their own power and lived experience impacts the research and/or policymaking process.

Consideration 3 – public involvement: Public involvement, when used sincerely and applied inclusively, can help to address the power imbalance between decision makers, such as policymakers and analysts, and marginalised groups. Participatory approaches to research ensure that those with lived experience of intersecting identities have a central voice in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies. While traditionally more common in qualitative research, efforts to redistribute power can also be made in quantitative research through, for example, involving community members throughout the research process, from conceptualisation through data gathering and dissemination.

Consideration 4 – reaching marginalised groups: Analysts should ensure that marginalised groups are reached by reducing the barriers to their participation. This involves, for example, ensuring venues are fully accessible and suitably located, translations are provided where necessary, using trusted mediators where necessary, and providing incentives and reimbursements to contributors in exchange for their input.

¹⁶⁴ [reflexivity \(warwick.ac.uk\)](https://www.warwick.ac.uk)

Consideration 5 – statistical approaches: The range of statistical approaches discussed demonstrates that no-one method fits all. Analysts should consider a range of options for carrying out intersectional data analysis, taking account of and setting out the advantages and disadvantages of techniques ahead of data collection. In addition, an assessment of the sampling approach and likely sample size could help determine which technique is most appropriate.

8. Useful resources

What is intersectionality?

Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams (2016), 'The urgency of intersectionality', [Kimberlé Crenshaw: The urgency of intersectionality | TED Talk](#)

Crenshaw, Kimberle Williams (2020) Intersectionality matters: under the blacklight: history rinsed and repeated [Podcast]. 28 April 2020. Stream 14. Under the Blacklight: History Rinsed and Repeated by Intersectionality Matters with Kimberlé Crenshaw | Listen online for free on SoundCloud

Intersectionality for policymakers

Christoffersen, Ashlee (2021), 'Intersectionality in practice: Research findings for practitioners & policy makers', [Intersectionality-in-practice.pdf \(ed.ac.uk\)](#)

Hankivsky, Olena. (Ed.). (2012). 'An Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework.' Vancouver, BC: Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy, Simon Fraser University., [\(PDF\) An Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Hankivsky, Olena (2014). Intersectionality 101. *The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, SFU*, 36, [\(PDF\) Intersectionality 101 \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Poverty and Inequality Commission (2021), 'Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland', [Intersectionality: Revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](#)

Intersectionality and the analytical process

Christoffersen, Ashlee (2017) 'Intersectional approaches to equality research and data', [Research and data briefing 2 Intersectional approaches to equality research and data.pdf \(ecu.ac.uk\)](#)

Cole, Elizabeth R. (2009). 'Intersectionality and research in psychology'. *American psychologist*, 64(3), [\(PDF\) Intersectionality and Research in Psychology \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Else-Quest, Nicole M., & Hyde, Janet S. (2016). Intersectionality in quantitative psychological research: II. Methods and Techniques. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), [\(PDF\) Intersectionality in Quantitative Psychological Research: II. Methods and Techniques \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (2021), 'Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data', [Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data \(data4sdgs.org\)](#)

Nicholas, Scott & Janet Siltanen, Janet (2016), 'Intersectionality and quantitative methods: assessing regression from a feminist perspective', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, [Intersectionality and Quantitative Methods \(researchgate.net\)](#)

9. Glossary

Context – the situation in which something exists or happens.

Intersectionality – is shaped by 3 key tenets: (1) people are shaped by their simultaneous membership of multiple interconnected social categories; (2) the interaction between multiple social categories occurs within a context of connected systems and structures of power; (3) structural inequalities are the outcomes of the interaction between social categories, power relations and contexts.

Intersectional approach - a way of identifying, understanding and tackling structural inequality in a given context that accounts for the lived experience of people with intersecting identities.

Intersectional data – data that takes into account two or more combinations of individual, social/cultural and environmental characteristics and, where the dataset allows, the context in which these combinations of characteristics give rise to relative advantage and disadvantage.

Power dynamics/relations – the way people or groups of people interact with each other where one person or group of people is more powerful than the other.

Protected characteristic – it is illegal to discriminate against someone based on these characteristics. They are: age, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion of belief, marriage and civil partnership, disability and pregnancy and maternity.

Social category – a group of people that have at least one characteristic or experience in common, such as ethnicity, disability, occupation, caring responsibilities.

Structural inequality – inequality that is embedded in social structures, based on institutionalised conceptions of differences based on, for example, gender, race, sexual orientation or disability.

Systems/structures of power – a way in which power is shared in a society, for example through politics, education or the economy.

Systems of oppression - discriminatory institutions, structures, and norms that are embedded in society. Examples include racism, sexism, homophobia and ableism.



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