how to test your communications

WHAT'S THIS?

This is a resource to help you test your messages. It is designed for campaigners who have little or no experience with message testing.

You can use this guide if you're working with a research company and want to be able to explain what you need and make sense of what they provide. You can also use it to get more involved in testing messages yourself.

We developed this practical guide after working with ILGA-Europe on the **Framing Equality Toolkit** because we realised that some campaigners have a blind spot around testing: both for why it's important and how to do it.

We've tried to make this guide accessible for everyone. Many of the more technical words are explained in the text, and the words highlighted are defined in a Glossary on page 58.

WHY TEST?

When you communicate you usually have a good idea of what you want to say and the change you want to make. But how do you know it's going to work? That's where testing comes in.

Testing tells you whether your choice of framing (the emphasis you put on particular concepts) leads to the outcomes you are aiming for.

A message that works for you won't necessarily work for your audience. For instance, you could say: "It is not propaganda to teach children about same-sex relationships" and get the reaction: "Propaganda! My children are under threat!" That's the kind of thing you can find out easily if you run an interview or focus group.

Testing helps you examine your assumptions about what will work and why. It helps you learn more about the people you communicate with.

Quite simply, it makes your campaigns more likely to succeed.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

This guide will be most helpful if you have already embarked on a strategic communications process and have some messages to test.

For support with strategic communications, go to our **Framing Equality Toolkit**. This will help you set out your vision, understand your audience and find the values your messages are based upon.

USING THIS GUIDE

We've written this in **two parts**.

The **first part** is a general guide to testing.

Know what you are looking for—form the right research questions and hypotheses before you begin **14**

Choose your methodology—decide whether focus groups, interviews or surveys are the best match for your research question **18**

Prepare your messages to test—follow some basic principles to get your messages ready to test and compare **30**

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No time or money to do any of this? **Try some basic ways to test 38**

And the **second part** is about message testing in action:

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Example: focus groups to test LGBTI messages—learn in detail how one organisation in Slovenia tested their messages **44**

More resources—see who can help you and where to find out more **52**

intro

ANY TESTING IS BETTER THAN NO TESTING

Sometimes testing can avert catastrophe.

Would you buy this inflatable pool mattress?

Several years ago, an environmental group released a campaign video featuring people in everyday situations, including school children, being violently blown up for not taking climate change seriously. It was intended to be funny, but many found it offensive and it was immediately withdrawn. Any testing of this video would probably have indicated that it wasn't a good idea to release—that its intended strength (humour) would only be appreciated by a niche audience.

Often campaign messages are developed under huge pressure, in a small team, and sent straight into the world. These messages are based on assumptions rather than evidence of how an audience will react and they are therefore more likely to be hit and miss.

When messages miss, they can leave a lasting negative impression on how people think about your issue. This can set you back in time and resources, and make it harder to realise your vision.

Our aim is to make testing common practice, whatever budget you have.

Of course, your results will be more reliable, the more time and money you can spend. There are obvious benefits of working with experts to produce high quality research, and we hope this guide supports campaigners to do that in an informed way.

There are also benefits of running low-cost testing methods yourself. Testing can be a valuable opportunity to get outside your immediate bubble, check your assumptions, and learn more about the people you are hoping to motivate with a campaign.

If you have no budget and only five minutes of time, you can still discuss the message with someone who doesn't live and breathe your campaign. A fresh perspective can help you see things you would otherwise miss. (Go to p.38 for quick, basic ways to test.)

BUT TESTING CAN'T DO EVERYTHING

The art of framing is not a laboratory exercise to develop and test messages to broadcast. It's a practice of anchoring all of your messages in your vision and values, and at the same time being sensitive to how people think and feel about your issue.

This information can be gathered formally, through research, and informally, through the many activities that bring campaigners into direct contact with their supporters and audiences. Both routes are important.

Testing messages should not be a *substitute* for spending time engaging directly with people.

process

1 | KNOW WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

For testing to be worthwhile, you should have an educated idea about the *active ingredient* in the message (the key feature you are hoping to test) and what *outcome* you want it to have.

A—HOW DO I KNOW WHAT MY 'ACTIVE INGREDIENT' IS?

Let's say that the inflatable mattress on p.10 was tested in a focus group. If it had been, then the active ingredient would have been shape. The company could have tested three different shapes of mattress.

When testing messages, your active ingredient might be:

> **Values**—e.g. comparing different compassionate values: universalism, self-direction or benevolence.

> **Metaphors**—e.g. comparing metaphors about construction, family, games or technology.

> **Messengers**—e.g. comparing whether your message is said by an expert, an activist, a celebrity, or a priest.

> **Images**—e.g. comparing whether your message is accompanied by photos that evoke positive or negative emotions.

> **Humour**—e.g. comparing funny with serious.

You can probably think of more ideas.

Whatever you choose, it's important to test just one thing at a time.
If you have two or more active ingredients in the mix, you won't be able to tell which one works.

B—HOW DO I KNOW WHAT OUTCOMES I AM LOOKING FOR?

Your outcomes should indicate a **shift in thinking** that will help towards your vision (see **Framing Equality Toolkit**).

For example, if your **vision** is 'an equal society where LGBTI parents are accepted and protected' and your campaign is working towards the outcome of a 'majority vote for equal family rights' in an upcoming referendum, then you should be looking for ways of thinking associated with that **outcome**. You would probably be looking for 'intention to vote yes' alongside a range of attitudes and beliefs about gender, sexuality and relationships. It is also useful to explore the wider attitudes and beliefs that are connected to your vision—for instance, how people think about immigration, welfare, and the role of government.

When deciding your outcomes you should ask: how does this relate to my vision? You might want to know if people *like* your message, for instance, but people can like or dislike messages and still be influenced in their thinking. You might want to know if people will *donate money* to your cause. Would that help build momentum for a more equal society?

We believe this boils down to two principles:

> ★ **Think big.** Think about your vision; the reason you campaign. Your message should be doing its little bit to work towards that. You'll have immediate goals too, just keep an eye on the big picture.

> ★ **Think beyond.** Campaigners often fall into the trap of focusing on very narrow goals when they test. It's easy to forget that *your message can have unintended consequences.* A message can build support for LGBTI equality, for instance, but at the same time reinforce stigma towards immigrants or disabled people. You can't measure everything, but you can try and look at some important outcomes beyond your immediate issue.

You might ask at this point: *who* should the message be aimed at? *Whose* thinking and behaviour needs to shift? You will want your message to have different outcomes for your base, your 'moveable middle' and your opposition. We explore this in the 'Know your Audience' section of the

Framing Equality Toolkit and the *Find the Right Sample* section on p.32.

The next step is to link your active ingredient and outcomes together with a research question.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In its simplest form a research question looks like this:
How does A affect B?

A is shorthand for the active ingredient in the message and B is shorthand for the outcome.

In product testing, for instance, you might ask:

❓ How does the *shape of a pool mattress* affect whether people want to buy it?

So, say you're testing messages on disability and your vision is of a just, caring world. You might, like Common Cause Foundation (2014), ask:

❓ How does *appealing to different values* affect whether people intend to *support a disability charity*?

Or, if you were trying to think beyond your immediate issue:

❓ How does *appealing to different values* affect whether people intend to *support a nature conservation charity*?

When you have a research question, you can use it to lay out some hypotheses.

HYPOTHESES

A hypothesis is a specific prediction that you want to test. It has more detail about what you want to compare and contrast in your message and what you think the impact will be.

You can have more than one hypothesis from your research question.

So, going back to the pool mattress, if you were testing the product in the image on p.10 against a traditional rectangular shape, your hypothesis might be:

People will be most likely to buy an inflatable pool mattress shaped like a rectangle, compared to the other pool mattress.

And in the disability message, one of your hypotheses might be:

Appealing to compassionate values will be more effective in increasing support for a disability charity than appealing to selfish values.

That might sound like a mouthful, but the more specific you are in your hypotheses, the easier it will be to choose the best methodology, prepare the messages, find the right sample and make sense of the results.

It's not always easy, or appropriate, to achieve academic standards when testing messages. Sometimes you might not be totally clear on what outcomes to measure, or you may have a lot of research questions that you want to test in one go.

But it's a step worth spending time on:

If you know what you're looking for, you will know what works.

2 | CHOOSE THE RIGHT METHODOLOGY

Most methods of testing can be done on a high budget or a shoe string.

Get help! Many of these methods require specialist support (e.g. for sampling, moderating or analysing). You can approach national polling companies, research firms, small recruitment agencies, universities and of course, PIRC and ILGA-Europe.

What is it?	Good because…	Less good because…	How to do it on a budget?
FOCUS GROUPS Small groups of people (usually 6–8) who are brought together for an hour or so to have a discussion about a topic or product.	They give rich data on how people think about a topic, offer multiple perspectives and give us a sense of social desirability (what's judged to be OK to think and say in society).	The conversation can be strongly affected by the dynamic of the group (for instance, when some people dominate conversation); they take a lot of time; and you don't get the input of a large number of people.	Use a *snowball method* (see p.33); and free venues, or ask a contact in a university if students would be interested. Discussions can be analysed straight from audio or video recordings. *Seek advice from trained moderators.*
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS One-on-one conversations that follow a script loosely, with flexibility to follow the thoughts and interests of the participants.	They can give you detailed insight into an individual's attitudes and reactions and encourage people to share things they might not be confident or comfortable enough to share in a group setting.	They can be time-intensive, so you can't test many people. They also depend on the participant feeling comfortable to speak freely.	Done in public spaces, stopping random members of the public to have a conversation about the messages.
ONLINE SURVEYS Surveys to test messages will usually involve asking people to read a message and then answer some questions. The results will tend to be analysed with statistics.	They allow you to collect bigger samples of people that are more representative. Because they yield numerical data, the data is presented as objective and factual, which can be persuasive.	You don't get the detail you get when talking to people.	With a free platform, like SurveyMonkey or Google Forms. You can find participants with the help of your networks. It won't be very reliable, but it will give you some idea.
THE ASK-A-FRIEND TEST Asking someone to give you a quick response to it.	Even a short conversation can help check whether your intended meaning is coming through.	Your friend probably isn't your main audience, so beware making strong conclusions!	Talk to someone who is unfamiliar with the campaign. Ask them how it makes them feel.
THE TELEPHONE GAME Testing if your message is memorable.	A fun and easy way to test whether your message is memorable or *sticky*. Get a sense of what is strong, weak or confusing in your message and adapt it.	It won't give you any insight into whether it's shifted anyone's thinking.	Like the game, you pass a message from person to person and see how it comes out at the end. See what's forgotten and what gets transformed or twisted.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are small groups of people (usually six—eight) who are brought together for an hour or so to have a facilitated discussion.

To be able to pull out themes, you'll need to run multiple focus groups. Depending on the nature of the issue, and who your audience/s are, it can be a good idea to separate the groups by demographic. For example, in our work on LGBTI discrimination with Legebitra in Slovenia, where the messages were about sexuality and gender, we ran one all-female group, one all-male group and one mixed gender focus group.

WHEN TO USE FOCUS GROUPS?

You should use focus groups to get insight into why people think the way they do; hear multiple perspectives on your message; generate creative ideas, and / or understand how people will respond in a social setting—i.e. to understand where there is consensus and controversy.

You might also want to run focus groups at an earlier stage, before you've got the exact material you want to test, as they are particularly useful for exploring topics and generating ideas.

You should not use focus groups if you need results that represent a large population or if you want statistical evidence (e.g. '60% of men between 50-60 prefer cats to dogs'). This is because **focus groups are small and will not normally be** *representative* (see p.33). Also, if you just want answers to specific questions, e.g. people's intention to vote in a referendum, you might choose to run a survey rather than a focus group.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

A skilled **moderator** is key to a successful focus group. The moderator facilitates the conversation. They have to know what you are looking for, and be good at listening very carefully. They should know how to avoid leading questions, and when to probe what people have said. One of the biggest risks with focus groups is that they get derailed by a bad dynamic or dominant individual. It is the role of the moderator to encourage open dialogue and make sure everyone speaks. Because this can be difficult

it's helpful to have an *assistant* to prepare equipment and take notes.

The **analyst** needs to know what you are looking for and be able to summarise from the transcripts, typically pulling out themes and illustrating with quotes. One person can both moderate and analyse.

If you have the budget, a research company can take care of everything, including recruitment, moderation and analysis.

DESIGNING A FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

It's a guide, not a script, and should help the moderator cover the main areas of conversation. Five or six areas should be manageable (you probably won't want more than ten) and it's good to start with simple, open questions that encourage talking and put people at ease. Focus groups allow you to be creative in how you ask people to engage with your messages. You could ask people to get into pairs or small groups to do an exercise, for instance, asking people to present a message back in a different format, or play devil's advocate. It's a good idea to give people time to digest the message in their own time before having a discussion. Go to p.60 for an example focus group guide.

FOCUS GROUPS ON A BUDGET

Focus groups can be done quite easily on a budget. You can recruit people using your existing networks, find free venues to host them, and analyse the results yourself. We suggest how to do this on the following page.

Alternatively, you can explore running an *online qual board*, which is an online forum, usually recruited and hosted by a research company. Online boards allow participants to sign in at their leisure over a longer time period of several days and contribute to the discussion over chat or video. They are interactive, although people come and go from the conversation, and there tends to be a trained moderator present at all times. Online qual boards can be faster and cheaper than traditional focus groups.

BUDGET FOCUS GROUPS PROCESS

Design guide

If you have contacts in a university you might find students who can design, run and analyse the focus groups. If you have a go at writing the guide yourself, some of links on p.55 will help.

Recruit people

You can use your networks to recruit friends-of-friends who are willing to offer time with little or no incentive (see snowball method, p.33).

Find a venue

A relaxed and neutral environment is helpful and it needs to be private. You can approach other charities and organisations to lend you a room for free. Or, if it feels safe, you can host in someone's living room or kitchen.

Prepare audio

Use your phone! Most phones record great audio. Always record on two devices so you have a back-up.

Run groups

If you do the moderation yourself, you'll find some advice in the links on p.55. Your job will be much easier if you have a volunteer to scribe and take care of the audio.

Transcribe

Transcription is extremely time consuming. Instead, you can ask an assistant to scribe and / or do as much on-the-go analysis as you can during the focus group. Or you can analyse afterwards straight from the audio.

Analyse data

Thorough analysis takes time and skill and requires transcription. Depending on your needs, you might just want to refer back to your research questions and make a summary of what you have observed.

Semi-structured interviews are one-on-one conversations that follow a loose script. When using interviews to test messages, the more you can run the better, but at minimum around 5 or 6 per message.

WHEN TO USE INTERVIEWS?

You should use interviews if you want to explore how an individual thinks about your message. You can also use them if you want to be able to understand similarities and differences between people in your audience.

Some researchers find interviews less risky than focus groups. This is because it's easier to recover from one bad interview (e.g. if the person doesn't turn up or behaves inappropriately) than a disrupted focus group.

You should *not* use interviews if you're interested in observing group dynamics. As with focus groups, you should not use interviews if you need results that are representative of the population (see p XX).

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

A skilled **interviewer** is obviously an asset! They must be able to establish good rapport and make people feel at ease. As with focus groups they need to listen carefully; have a clear idea of what you are looking for, and know when to follow up on answers with further questions.

The **analyst** needs to have the skills noted in the section above. Interview analysis can be more time-consuming than focus group analysis, but this will depend on the length and number of your interviews. Typically, interviews mean more transcripts to analyse.

WRITING AN INTERVIEW GUIDE

It's important to start the interview in a conversational way to make people feel relaxed. The interviewer should explain the context—assuring people, for instance, that they're not selling anything and are no special

expert on the subject. Like a focus group, your guide should start general and become more specific, and should only cover a few key topic areas. In each area, the interviewer's goal is to probe opinions as much as possible, without going off track: to understand *why* the participant thinks the way they do. This means asking open elicitive questions rather than closed questions (see Extra Resources on p.56). It can also mean asking the same question in a number of different ways.

INTERVIEWS ON A BUDGET

You can follow much the same process outlined on p.22. If you have time, you can do the transcription yourself. Skilled transcribers take about four hours to transcribe one hour of audio; a novice can take three times that long.

Alternatively, you could opt for doing a series of short, informal interviews where the goal is simply to get a sense of how people react to your message.

For example, the Lithuanian Gay League (LGL) ran short street interviews to test some messages in response to the anti-gender discourse. They did this with their volunteer team on virtually no budget. For their sample, they stopped passers-by in the street and collected basic background information (age, gender, religion, education). Aiming to interview around five people per message, they managed to talk to 16 individuals, giving each person just one message to think about. They tested three different messages, and they used a basic interview script as a guide, with only three main question areas: *comprehension* (e.g. 'What do you think this message is trying to say?), *attitudes* (e.g. 'Are there any bits of the message that you agree / disagree with?) and *feelings* (e.g. 'How do you feel about this message, generally?'). Go to p.64 to see the questions they asked. After a day of interviewing, the volunteer team came together to share their reflections and write a summary.

The FrameWorks Institute have pioneered an approach to testing messages with 'On the Street Interviews' (go to p.52 for contact information).

SURVEYS

An online experimental survey involves asking people to read a message and then answer some questions. Usually, you will have a few messages you are interested in testing and you can do this by splitting your sample into groups, so one group reads Message 1, the next group reads Message 2, and so on. All the groups read different messages but answer the same questions, which allows you to compare across the groups. The results tend to be numerical and analysed with statistical tools.

WHEN TO USE A SURVEY?

You should use a survey if you want to collect data that is representative of a population (see p.33). Also if you have variations of your message that you want to compare with statistical tools across your target group.

You should *not* use a survey if you want to explore in-depth how people think and why. If you want to understand people's reactions, or to ask for creative ideas, then you should probably use focus groups or interviews. You can measure these things in a survey using open response questions, but they are usually better observed in dialogue.

In a survey, the sample has to be large enough to mimic the population you are interested in. A statistician will use a 'power analysis' to work out exactly how large the sample needs to be, but suffice to say that you will typically need hundreds of participants, even thousands. You should be careful using a survey if you do not have access to a large sample.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Survey design is a skill. You can use survey questions to measure attitudes, intentions, beliefs and behaviours, but they must be carefully designed. Harvard University (2007) offers three tips for good design:

1. Measure what you intend to measure
2. Don't measure anything else
3. Make sure the question means the same thing to all respondents

Many questionnaires already meet these criteria. Check if you can use an existing survey before inventing your own (see p.57 for where to look).

A **statistician** understands how to prepare, analyse and interpret survey data. They will be able to check whether the questions are appropriate and, if needs be, whether certain questions cluster together. To make comparisons between messages, they will be looking at groups rather than individuals. They will need to know when differences between groups are important or not, e.g. whether the group that read Message 1 expressed less homophobic views than the control group.

DESIGNING A SURVEY EXPERIMENT: EXAMPLE

LGL had three messages about gender and tested how they affected people's attitudes towards gender and sexuality:

First they divided their nationally representative sample into *four* groups, one for each message plus a control group that didn't read anything at all. This was so they could later compare the messages with each other and with a baseline. They wanted to make sure participants in the message groups read their message properly. To encourage this, they asked people to reflect on the main point it was making and summarise that point in their own words. Next, everyone filled out the same questionnaire, about gender and sexuality. They had 35 questions items in the format 'how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?', asking people to rate on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This questionnaire is on p.67. Having collected the crucial data, they finished with a debrief to explain what the research was about.

MEASURING ATTITUDES OR BEHAVIOURS

Asking people about their attitudes is easy, but attitudes don't always translate to behaviour. If you want to know how someone will behave, you can ask about commitment or intention to act; you can do a follow-up survey (for instance after an election, to ask how people voted), or, better yet, you can design a survey with some observable behaviour built in (for instance, asking people to sign an online petition or pledge support for a charity).

Always check your design is ethical (see p.54).

Whatever you ask people on surveys, you face the possibility that people will be dishonest. Sometimes people don't read the questions and click at random. Sometimes people lie in order to present themselves in a positive light. You can guard against this in the way you design the questions (for instance, by reverse scoring some of them and by generally throwing people off the scent). The analyst will also have ways of checking and cleaning the data and, if you're really worried, can control for response bias using other questionnaires.

SURVEYS ON A BUDGET

Of all the methods, this is probably the hardest one to do well on a budget. You can do some of the elements of designing and running the survey for free. For instance, you can build your own survey on a free platform like SurveyMonkey or Google Forms (although they tend to charge for large samples or surveys). And you can find questionnaires for free by searching large public databases like the European Social Survey (see p.57 for a list of databases to search).

Statisticians perhaps aren't so easy to find, but if you reach out to your networks and contact a couple of university psychology departments, you will probably find someone who can help with the analysis.

The sample is trickier. You can try the snowball method (see p.33), but you might struggle to get enough data this way. Quite simply, you need a lot of quality data to test messages well. The best way to recruit people for a survey experiment is to pay a reputable polling company or recruitment agency.

PHONE SURVEYS

Alternatively, you can run surveys over the phone. There are benefits in being able to contact large, specific segments of the population via publicly available telephone numbers. You can easily do a targeted or random sample (see p.33) using phone numbers. On the other hand, phone surveys can exclude certain groups, depending on who is reachable via landline and mobile. And it can be a time-consuming method for testing messages because of the sheer number of calls.
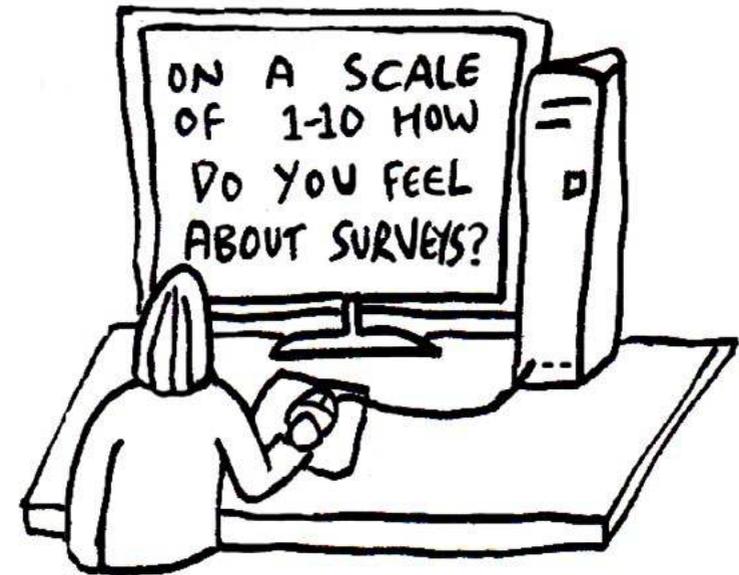
3 | PREPARE YOUR MESSAGES TO TEST

Now you've chosen a methodology, you're ready to refine your materials.

## KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE MESSAGE

Think hard about your research question and hypotheses. You need to bring out the 'active ingredient' clearly in each message. That might be value, an emotion, a metaphor or a messenger. Focus on that and minimise any content that might dilute or distract from that.

KEEP IT SHORT & SIMPLE

Aim to contain your message within a short paragraph of 2—4 sentences. It's always a good rule of thumb to keep messages concise so people can absorb them without too much effort. Ensure the language is accessible. *Don't try to do too much!*

COMPARE LIKE WITH LIKE

You should compare text with text, or images with images. If you want to use both, only vary one thing at a time:
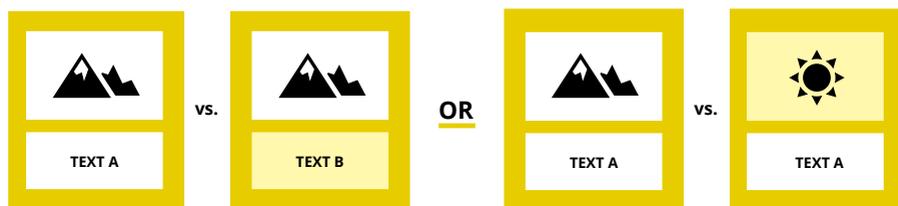
Generally the following principles apply across the board. However, if you've chosen a survey, it is particularly important that the message is simple and concise. This is because you will not be present when participants read it, so it is harder to establish whether they have understood and engaged. If you really want reactions on more complex material, a qualitative technique (i.e. focus groups or interviews) will be more suitable than a survey.

EXAMPLE: MESSAGES ON DISABILITY AND CONSERVATION

These are messages taken from a study called *No Cause is an Island* (Common Cause Foundation, 2014):

Message 1: Scope works with disabled people and their families at every stage of their lives. We believe that disabled people should have the same opportunities as everyone else, enabling them to live the lives they choose. Yet today, disabled people are more likely to live in poverty, more likely to experience negative attitudes or prejudice, and are more likely to live alone. They still face marginalisation and discrimination. We help to address the barriers that cause disabled people to be treated unequally, support them in making decisions about what they want to do, and help them put those choices into practice. With the right reassurance and practical assistance, disabled people can live independent lives.

Message 2: Scope works with disabled people and their families at every stage of their lives. We believe in giving disabled people the chance to achieve greater success in their lives, so that they can fully contribute to the economy. Yet today, disabled people are more likely to be unemployed and receiving benefits. We deliver a range of low cost early interventions – helping to address these issues, while delivering considerable cost savings for both disabled people and the state. Early intervention represents a great return on investment. For example, one initiative costs around £65,000 to set up – that's just £500 each for the 130 or so families that can be reached over the course of a year.

Is it clear what's going on?	✔	The authors are carefully appealing to different value groups and they expect that Message 1 will be more effective in encouraging support (for both disability and nature conservation) than Message 2.
Are they short and simple?	✔	Both messages are between 100—150 words, and are written in fairly accessible language.
Like with like?	✔	These are both in text format, with a similar structure and length.

4 | FIND THE RIGHT SAMPLE

Your sample is the group of people that you will test the message with. If you start by thinking through your ideal sample, you can then develop a sampling strategy that fits your budget.

Here are some simple questions you can ask:

❓ **Focus**—is there an audience you are particularly interested in testing the message with? Who are the group/s that will help to reach your outcomes?

❓ **Exclusion**—are there people you want to exclude from the test, e.g. those who are already strongly persuaded for or against your cause?

❓ **Comparison**—is it useful for you to be able to *compare* groups of people? You can look at different demographics within your sample, if you expect some groups to think about the issue in a different way (e.g. comparing gender groups when testing messages on gender).

**EXAMPLE—FRAMING THE ECONOMY
(PIRC, NEF, NEON & THE FRAMEWORKS INSTITUTE)**

When we ran focus groups to test messages about the economy, our main sampling criteria were as follows:

Focus—Age. Half our focus groups were for people over 45, half for people under 45. *Why?* Some of our messages were about perceptions of the past and we wanted to hear discussions between groups who had lived through different eras.

Exclusion—People with strong political views to the left or right. *Why?* We did not want the discussions dominated or skewed by individuals who had strong views.

Comparison—By age group. *Why?* We wanted to know whether the references in our messages were different for older and younger groups.

Messages tend to be most effective when they PERSUADE your moveable middle and ACTIVATE your (disengaged) base.

It can be a waste of time and money to test with the wrong sample. Discuss it with a colleague and look back over your hypotheses to see if this really is the ideal sample.

DIFFERENT SAMPLING OPTIONS

A **nationally representative sample** is a group of people that accurately reflects the population in your country. It will contain similar proportions of young adults through to older adults, for example, and people who have school education through to post-graduate qualifications. The sample size will differ depending on the size of the national population, so if you are trying to find a representative sample in France, where the population is 66 million, you would need about 2,400 people to be confident about your results. It is basically impossible to get a sample like this without the help of a national polling company that has enough data and access to recruit people. But it's worth doing if you want statistics on national attitudes.

A **random sample** is where everyone in a population has an equal chance of being picked. If you were picking a random sample from one school, for instance, you might assign all the students a number and then generate some random numbers with a computer to pick a smaller group. In practice, giving everyone an equal chance of being picked is incredibly hard. You might go out onto the street and pick people 'at random', but your choice of timing and location will inevitably mean that people who live in different neighbourhoods or spend more time at home would not have an equal chance of being picked. A truly random sample in a national population requires a polling company, but if you use the on-the-street method, it is useful to consider who doesn't have a high chance of being in your sample, and whether you can compensate for that.

A **snowball sample** is a way of finding people through acquaintances and networks. The idea, like a snowball, is to start small and then build up quickly as people reach out to their own networks. It is neither random, nor representative, but the bigger the sample gets, the more representative and useful the data will be. This is a technique that's particularly

useful if you are trying to find people that are difficult to reach. In some countries it will be the best way of inviting LGBTI people to participate in research. It also has the benefit of being free or very low cost—you just need to start the snowball.

Targeted sampling is when you already have a specific group in mind. Maybe you are looking for women aged between 35-50 who have children. If this is the case you can either ask a polling firm or recruitment agency to find this group for you or you can use any of the methods above and develop your own screening questions. These questions (which in this case would cover age, gender and family) will allow you to be selective.

A note of caution: If you have a target group in mind, don't forget about the other people that are important to you. Sometimes campaigners spend their energy chasing people that are hostile or undecided about their cause and end up creating messages that alienate their base of supporters.

YOU CAN ALSO USE RESEARCH TO HELP IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

If you don't already have a clear idea of your audience/s, you can still test your messages, making sure to have a sample of people with a mix of age, gender, education etc. Then afterwards, you can analyse the data for differences in these demographics. You can find out how different people already think about your cause, and who is more persuaded or motivated after reading your message. This can help you learn more about who you should be targeting. N.B. If you want to follow this approach and draw conclusions about subgroups, you need to first check with the analyst that the sample will be big enough to support being split and analysed like this.

EXAMPLE: PIRC & LGL

LGL collected a nationally representative sample of 2000 people in Lithuania with the help of a polling company. They used the data to find out more about who was supportive or unsupportive of LGBTI equality. What they found was in line with patterns in other countries: women were more supportive than men; younger people (under 35) over older (over 35); more educated over less; higher income over low; single over married and urban over rural. They could then use this information to find their target audience.

For more on audience see the *Know Your Audience section* in the **Framing Equality Toolkit**.

BUT DAD I WAS JUST SHOWING HIM A SNOWBALL SAMPLE

5 | UNDERSTAND YOUR RESULTS

Once you've run some testing, you need to be able to make sense of the results.

At this point, your should go back to your research questions and hypotheses (see p.14):

If you know what you're looking for, you will know what works.

With good research design, you should be able to work out whether your hypotheses were right or wrong. So if you ran a focus group on inflatable mattresses, your results might tell you that, yes, everyone prefered to buy the one shaped like a rectangle.

You might also sift out new information that is useful to you. So if people agreed that rounded edges made the mattress look more comfortable then you might decide to develop a rectangular model with soft corners.

WORKING WITH AGENCIES

Always make sure that the analyst knows exactly what you are looking for. This is especially important for qualitative techniques like focus groups and interviews, because the analysis tends to be more subjective and there is more room for different interpretations.

Just as you need to check your own thinking and assumptions, you need to check the assumptions of the analyst. Agencies will tell you certain things 'work' and others don't, so make sure their idea of what works is aligned with yours. Typically, agencies follow a marketing approach to testing messages—they might conclude a message works if people *like* it, or if people can *relate* to it. If you want to encourage the belief that the economic system should be changed, for example, then the question of whether people like the message or not is probably irrelevant.

EXAMPLE OF LGL SURVEY

PIRC ran a national survey with LGL to test gender messages because we wanted to know which ones encouraged more progressive attitudes towards gender and sexuality.

So, for example, we asked questions like 'There are only two biological sexes, male or female' and 'All people identify as either male or female' (a **binary** way of thinking); and questions like 'Children should be brought up in strict discipline' and 'This country needs a strong and courageous leader which the people will follow' (an **authoritarian** way of thinking). The full questionnaire is on p.67.

The company that supported our testing then analysed how the messages impacted on these different ways of thinking. From the data, we could conclude that one message *Everyone has a gender, even your Grandma* (about the experience of women in Lithuanian society from the Soviet era), successfully shifted people to less binary thinking about sex and gender.

IT'S NOT A GOOD RESULT. YOU ARE JUST HOLDING THE GRAPH UPSIDE DOWN
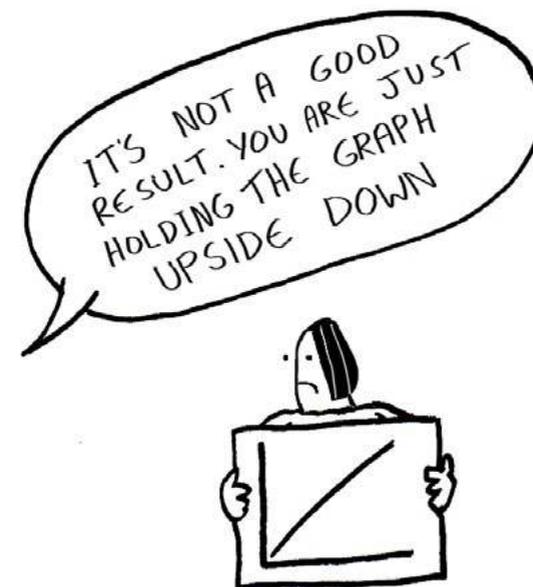
ZERO BUDGET, SOME TIME

There are ways you can test messages with no budget or expertise.

IF YOU HAVE SEVERAL HOURS

⚗ **Door-knocking** is something you might be doing anyway in your campaign team. If it feels safe to door-knock, you could use it as a chance to find out how people are thinking about your issue and test run a couple of message ideas. Work them into the conversation and see how people react.

⚗ **Workshops** with people outside your team (or in a different sector entirely) can be a good use of a couple of hours to creatively test your assumptions about the message. You can do exercises to see what words and images people associate with the message, ask people which values they feel are being expressed. The Framing Equality Toolkit contains a number of exercises you could use.

⚗ **The Telephone Game** is a fun way to test whether your message is memorable. Like the playground game, you pass a message from person to person and see how it comes out at the end. You can look for what sticks, what gets forgotten, and what gets transformed or twisted. The FrameWorks Institute have built a sophisticated testing method called 'Persistence Trials' using the Telephone concept (see p.52 for contact details).

JUST FIVE MINUTES

⚗ **Talk** to someone who is unfamiliar with the campaign. This could be a friend, family member, or someone in a different department of your organisation. Even a short conversation can help you get a new perspective and check whether your message has the meaning you intend.

⚗ **Email** some of your ideas to friends and colleagues. Explain your audience and purpose and ask them which message they would choose and why. Ask whether they can see any risks or unintended consequences.

examples

EXAMPLE: MESSAGE TESTING FOR MYTHS

Sanna has heard that the practice of myth-busting is not effective because people just end up remembering the myth. She wants to test this in her campaign on LGB rights at work.

Know what you are looking for

Sanna's research question is open, but her predictions are informed by what she has read.

Research question: How does myth-busting affect people's understanding of sexual orientation discrimination in employment?

Hypothesis: People who read a myth-bust will be more likely to think that LGB people experience equality at work, compared to people who read a message about LGB people needing workplace support.

Choose the methodology

Sanna has chosen an online survey, because her colleagues abroad are doing the same and she wants the data to be easily compared. For the outcomes, they are all using a specific questionnaire on perceptions of the workplace for different groups in society. She's also interested in collecting data from a control group who read no message, because she wants a baseline for what people think about workplace discrimination in her country.

Group A: Myth-busting message

Group B: Message that LGB people need workplace support

Group C: Control (no message)

Questionnaire
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Look for what works

With some help from a university student, Sanna creates an average score for each group, and compares results.
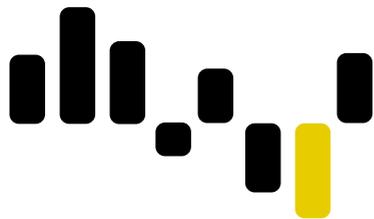
Conclusion: Sanna's hypothesis is correct! Myth busting backfires.

Find the sample

Sanna does not have the budget to pay an agency to recruit a large, representative sample, so she opts for a snowball method, using her networks to send it out to as many people as possible. She designs a short demographic screener based on who she is looking for.
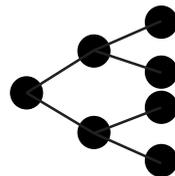
Focus on: Finnish people in work, aged between 18 and 35 years old.

Exclude: Anyone who identifies as being LGB.

Prepare the messages

Because Sanna is using a survey, she wants the messages to be short and clear. She is careful to keep the sentence structure and style as similar as possible.

Message 1 (myth):
"Lesbian, gay and bisexual people have the same rights as all other workers. In some areas they even have special rights." Not true! Legal protection has improved but we still have a lot of work to do.

Message 2 (support):
"Lesbian, gay and bisexual people continue to face discrimination at work. In some areas they need increased support." True! Legal protection has improved but we still have a lot of work to do.

EXAMPLE: USING FOCUS GROUPS TO TEST VIDEOS

1. KNOW WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

Legebitra, an LGBTI organisation based in Slovenia, ran a strategic communications process to articulate their vision, goals and values. From this, they wanted to explore these research questions:

- ❓ Is **humour** effective in encouraging support?
- ❓ What are the best ways to articulate the **common ground** that people share regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics?
- ❓ How can people believe that they can be **part of the change**?
- ❓ What is the upper limit of **intimate physical contact** people can see and still feel comfortable and supportive?

Legebitra created three messages, each going for a different emphasis (e.g. humour, articulating common ground). They wanted to *compare* how effective they were at encouraging support for LGBTI people.

"*Registrirani istospolni partnerji ne potrebujejo poroke.*"

NI RES!

Poroka je edina z ustavo zaščitena skupnost dveh odraslih!

They also wanted to *contrast* these new messages with older campaign material that had taken a more rational, fact based approach. (The slogan in the image opposite reads "Registered same-sex partners do not need marriage. Not true! Marriage is the only constitutionally protected communion between two adults").

2. CHOOSE YOUR METHODOLOGY

Legebitra chose to run Focus Groups because they had a number of research questions to explore and wanted to do this in a creative, generative way. They wanted to understand how people thought about LGBTI people in Slovenia and get ideas that would inform their long-term communication approach.

During the focus groups, the moderators asked numerous questions to see whether the message of the video was understood, what kind of emotional reactions people had, and whether people identified with the actors. See the question guide on p.60.

They worked with a professional research company to run three focus groups, and then with the local University to run another three. This allowed their staff team to gain experience in coordinating focus groups and they were able to double their data with very little additional cost.

Despite facing some constraints in the low-budget groups (they couldn't afford to hire venues, pay participants, meet the sampling criteria or transcribe the conversations), the University produced high quality results. The students recruited friends-of-friends and acquaintances back in their hometowns during the holidays. The groups met in people's living rooms, and the students commented that the informal atmosphere might have helped the flow of conversation because participants felt relaxed. Rather than transcribing, the students made summaries of their observations and compared notes at the end.

"Working with the University students taught us that low budget focus groups are definitely an option when you don't have the funding to test messages—the results we got were so similar to the professional agency focus groups."
Lana Gobec, Legebitra

3. PREPARE YOUR MESSAGES TO TEST

Each message was a short video, using friends and contacts as actors.

Message 1—Everyday Life.

In this video they wanted their audience to understand the message: In everyday life, I am free in my decisions and in my actions, with my friends, family and with the person I love. That is why I wish the same for LGBTI people.

They did this through portraying a man going about his life, making coffee in the morning, going to work, texting his partner and turning up for dinner with flowers. It is only when his partner opens the door that we realise he is a man.

What they were looking for
Is portraying 'everyday life' a good way of making people feel common ground with LG people? How do people react to the kiss? Does this impact people's ability to relate and understand the message?

Message 2—Uncomfortable Situations.

In this video they wanted their audience to understand the message: *Some things are not worth losing important people over. Sexual orientation is one of those things.*

They did this with a video of a woman taking her partner to meet her parents for the first time. First we see a scenario of rejection, where the parents are shocked that their daughter's partner is female and react by throwing them out of the house. Then we rewind and see an alternative scenario, where the parents welcome the couple warmly and everyone has dinner together.

What they were looking for
Is portraying an 'uncomfortable situation' a good way of making people feel common ground with LG couples? Does this scenario help demonstrate behaviour change for people?

Message 3—Not An Issue.

In this video they wanted their audience to understand the message: *We want to live in a society where the fact that people are in same-sex relationships does not play any role.*

They did this with a video of an elderly grandmother browsing at a fruit market. She drops her basket of apples and is helped by a same sex couple. As they walk away, hand in hand, she looks after them in shock. But instead of making a homophobic comment, she smiles and says what nice manners women have these days.

What they were looking for
Do people find this funny, and does humour help encourage more progressive views?

Still from 'Not an Issue' video.

4. FIND THE RIGHT SAMPLE

Legebitra chose to test their messages with a targeted sample of the moveable middle in Slovenia, which meant designing a screening questionnaire that excluded strong supporters and opponents. They knew

some of the characteristics of the moveable middle from their own audience research (for example, they knew they wanted to talk to people aged between 30 and 45 years). With the help of a research company, they created further criteria. For example, one screening question was developed from the European Values Survey which asks 'who would you not like to have as neighbours?' People ranked 'LGBTI people' among a longer list of neighbours (which includes people from another race, drug addicts, criminals etc.) and then Legebitra excluded anyone who put LGBTI people at the high or low extremes.

Because of stark gender differences in attitudes towards LGBTI people in Slovenia, they decided to run one focus group with just women, one with just men, and another mixed. This strategy allowed them to see reactions that would be hidden if all the groups were mixed.

Sampling on a budget...

The University students reached out to friends and acquaintances to collect their sample. They gave everyone the same questionnaire but didn't have time to screen people out and look for new participants. So, compared to the professional focus groups, their sample was more educated, had some people with stronger homophobic attitudes and included participants outside the 30-45 range. They also struggled to recruit an all male group so settled for two mixed and one female group. It is useful to note that, despite this, the results were very similar.

5. UNDERSTAND YOUR RESULTS

Of the three videos, the 'Not An Issue' video with the grandmother seemed to work best. Its **humour** encouraged positive reactions and an understanding of the message that people should be judged by their character not their sexuality.

People seemed to feel they had more **common ground** with the man going about his normal day ('Everyday Life') than the parents and children in the meet-the-parents video ('Uncomfortable Situations'). Some people thought it was unrealistic to have dinner at the first introduction, and some struggled to identify with the parents i.e. seemingly because they didn't want to imagine their own children coming out.

This family dinner ('Uncomfortable Situations') also seemed to encourage traditional family values and gendered parenting roles. People commented, for instance that the father was 'too mild, not masculine enough, not as determined as a father should be'. There were also discussions about how the scene should have been inside rather than on the doorstep, perhaps reinforcing the unhelpful belief that sexuality is a private matter. By contrast, the 'Not An Issue' video, with a visibly queer couple holding hands at a market, was probably helpful in normalising acceptance in public. So while both 'Not an issue' and 'Uncomfortable Situations' modelled acceptance, the former gave a more subtle and less challenging demonstration of how people can be **part of the change**.

The kiss at the end of the 'Everyday Life' video really tested people's boundaries for viewing **physical intimacy**. This is where gender differences really came in. In the all male focus groups watching a scene with two men kissing provoked such a negative reaction that they couldn't concentrate on the content or intention of the message. This was not the same in the mixed or female groups, perhaps revealing that men feel more able and encouraged to express homophobia in an all male environment. In any case, Legebitra concluded that a kiss was probably still too far for the Slovenian public, that it could damage the strategy of building common ground with their audience.

In summary, all of the videos showed some potential to build support for LGBTI equality and they succeeded in engaging people emotionally. Legebitra reflected that the older campaigns were successful at educating people about discrimination, but not at making people feel motivated to act.

resources

WHO CAN HELP YOU TEST

While you can do useful testing on your own with very little budget and experience, some of the options we've outlined require specialist support.

Here's a list of the kind of organisations you can approach for help:

Framing **specialists**—there are a number of organisations and consultants that are set up to develop and test frames:

⭐ The FrameWorks Institute frameworksinstitute.org, contact: info@frameworksinstitute.org

⭐ Anat Shenker Osorio asocommunications.com, contact: anat@asocommunications.com

⭐ Centre for Story based Strategy storybasedstrategy.org, contact: info@storybasedstrategy.org

National polling companies—expensive but efficient and quick. Polling companies tend to have high standards in traditional research methodologies and usually have the in-house expertise to design, run and analyse surveys, focus groups and interviews, but are particularly useful for surveys: they are often the *only* way of getting a representative national sample, if you need one (see p.33). Many large companies like this have lower rates for charities and non-profits.

Marketing and PR firms—also a fairly expensive option. These firms are practised in the art of reaching and persuading a target audience with a message, so can help you with the creative development of messages as well as testing methodologies. However, the tactics and values of a marketing firm may not always be aligned with the research you want to do. It's important to be clear about what you want from testing and check that their methods can deliver that.

Small recruitment agencies—a slightly cheaper way to find a sample, particularly for focus groups and interviews. These companies tend not to have enormous databases of participants, like polling companies, but they are geared up for finding a target sample through a variety of means (e.g. through databases, networks and on street recruitment) and they tend to be reliable recruiters , particularly for focus groups and interviews.

Mechanical Turk—a cheap way of getting a large sample for online studies. It's not necessarily the most ethical way to test as the workers tend to get a raw deal. Read more on p.57. mturk.com

Universities—an excellent way to support research to an academic quality, without the high costs. If you can make contact with Professors in the social sciences, you might find that they can help through providing advice on the design, finding a student sample, or supporting the analysis. Even better, they might give the project to their students as a research assignment, and get them to design, run and analyse the whole thing. If you're running a survey that will require statistical analysis, try the psychology department; if you are running focus groups or interviews, try the sociology, anthropology or marketing departments.

ILGA-Europe—with the Reframing LGBTI Equality in Europe project and the Creating Opportunities programme, ILGA-Europe have stepped up their work on strategic communication and campaigning. Get in touch for inquiries on how ILGA-Europe can support your activities in this area: ilga-europe.org/what-we-do/our-work-supporting-movement/our-expertise/communication

PIRC—we wrote this guide to help you test messages so get in touch if you want advice about anything you have read! publicinterest.org.uk

RESEARCH ETHICS

Before embarking on any testing, make sure your plans follow ethical guidelines.

Go to apa.org/pubs/authors/ethics02.pdf to read more.

Some tips:

Collect informed consent—let participants know the general purpose of the research (i.e. 'this is funded by a charity and we're interested in your opinions on gender and sexuality') , inform them of their right to withdraw at any time, agree the incentives in advance and provide a point of contact.

Do not set out to harm or deceive—do not give your participants false information or cause them emotional distress.

Give participants a debrief—after the research, provide more information and an opportunity for people to find about about the nature, results and conclusions of your research.

Do not misrepresent your results—do not fabricate data or cherry-pick findings.

FURTHER READING

GENERAL

Strategic communications
Framing Equality Toolkit (2017): PIRC & ILGA-Europe.

Values in messages
Holmes, T., Blackmore, E., Hawkins, R. & Wakeford, T. (2011). The Common Cause Handbook: Public Interest Research Centre.

Crompton, T., Weinstein, N., Sanderson, R., Kasser, T., Maio, G., Henderson, S. (2014) No Cause is an Island, Common Cause Foundation: London.

Common Cause Communication: A Toolkit for Charities (2015), Common Cause Foundation: London.

Testing images
Climate Outreach on testing images: climatevisuals.org

Resource Media's guide on visual communication: resource-media.org/what-they-see-matters/

Overview of research methods
Davies, M. B., & Hughes, N. (2014). *Doing a successful research project: Using qualitative or quantitative methods*. Palgrave Macmillan

FOCUS GROUPS

Running focus groups
Gibbs, A. (1997). Social research update. Focus groups, 23, 2014.

WikiHow: How to Run a Focus Group, available at: wikihow.com/Run-a-Focus-Group

Analysing focus groups

Analyzing Focus Group Data, chapter available at: sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11007_Chapter_7.pdf

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Dickinson, W. B., Leech, N. L., Zoran, A. G. (2009). A Qualitative Framework for Collecting and Analyzing Data in Focus Group Research, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(3). Available at: research.apc.org/images/2/2f/A_Qualitative_Framework_for_Collecting_and_Analyzing_Data_in_Focus_Group_Research.pdf

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2002). Designing and conducting focus group interviews. *Social analysis, selected tools and techniques*, 4(23), 4-24. Available at:
eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf

INTERVIEWS

Choosing between interviews and focus groups

Azzara, C. (2010). Qualitatively Speaking: The focus group vs. in-depth interview debate. Quirk's Media. Available at:
quirks.com/articles/qualitatively-speaking-the-focus-group-vs-in-depth-interview-debate

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British dental journal*, 204(6), 291-295. Available at:
nature.com/bdj/journal/v204/n6/full/bdj.2008.192.html?foxtrotcallback=true

Elicitive questions

350.org on elicitive questions: trainings.350.org/resource/organising-with-elicitive-questions/

SURVEYS

Questionnaire design

Harvard University Programme on Social Research: Tip Sheet on Question Wording. Harvard University: 2007. Available at: psr.iq.harvard.edu/files/psr/files/PSRQuestionnaireTipSheet_0.pdf

Davies, M. B., & Hughes, N. (2014). *Op Cit*: Chapters 5 and 6.

Mechanical Turk

Goodman, J. K., Cryder, C. E., & Cheema, A. (2013). Data collection in a flat world: The strengths and weaknesses of Mechanical Turk samples. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 26(3), 213-224.

Psychology Today blog on the experience of MTurk workers: psychologytoday.com/blog/the-science-behind-behavior/201507/my-experience-amazon-mechanical-turk-mturk-worker

Free questionnaires

Look for tried and tested questionnaires in a European context at:

European Social Survey, which collects data every two years across Europe on a wide range of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, including LGBTI discrimination. europeansocialsurvey.org

Eurobarometer, which has been running since the 1970s and measures attitudes towards European unification, institutions and policies, with occasional special issues e.g. on social exclusion. gesis.org/eurobarometer-data-service

European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, which monitors attitudes and practices on rights across the EU, looking at gender, sexuality, race, migration and disability. fra.europa.eu/en/research/surveys

You can also go to Google Scholar and search for keywords, like '*survey* on *attitudes* towards *lesbians* and *gay men*'. scholar.google.com

GLOSSARY

✳ **Base**—the group of people who are already broadly supportive of your issue.

✳ **Baseline**—a measurement of your outcomes with people who have not been exposed to any messages, to act as a starting point for comparisons.

✳ **Cherry-picking**—selectively picking a few results and ignoring the rest.

✳ **Control group**—a group of people who are not exposed to any messages.

✳ **Demographic**—the characteristics of a group of people in a population, for instance age, race, gender, education level and sexuality.

✳ **Elicitive questions**—questions that are designed to draw out a longer response, as opposed to (for instance) closed questions with yes / no answers.

✳ **Framing**—the way that choices in how an issue is presented influence what people feel, think and do.

✳ **Incentives**—a reward given in exchange for participating in research.

✳ **Leading questions**—questions that prompt people to give a desired answer.

✳ **Moveable middle**—people who can be persuaded, for instance people who are undecided or haven't yet engaged with your issue.

✳ **Qualitative**—research methods that are exploratory, designed to gain insights into reasons, opinions and motivations, i.e. focus groups and interviews.

✳ **Questionnaire**—a set of prepared questions, often with a choice of answers.

✳ **Reverse scoring**—when some questions are worded in the negative and their raw score needs to be reversed.

✳ **Screening questions**—questions designed to find out whether a participant should be excluded from taking part.

✳ **Statistical tools**—mathematical techniques that are used to analyse and interpret numerical data.

✳ **Statistic**—a piece of data obtained from a statistical study, e.g. a percentage.

✳ **Strategic Communications**—an approach based on analysis of systemic problems and solutions that has long term goals and uses psychological principles.

✳ **Transcript**—a written record of interview and focus group discussions.

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

INTRODUCTION | 20 MIN

Objective: To introduce the research company, research methodology, objectives. To make respondents feel calm and create a safe, relaxed atmosphere (assure anonymity; explain reasons for taping and observing; explain that there are no right and wrong answers & everyone has a right to their own opinion, critique is welcomed; ask people to talk one at a time)

Introduction of moderator

Introduction of respondents with use of pictures.

I will ask each one of you to share with the group something about yourself using the black and white photos on the table in front of you as a prompt. Please choose up to 5 photos that say something about you. Try to share something with us besides how old you are: e.g. what is your occupation, what are your hobbies etc. I would also like to know what truly matters to you. What do you find important in life?

MODERATOR: give photos to respondents and wait for a few minutes until they choose. When done, ask them to briefly present the photos they chose and say a bit about themselves .

Today we are going to talk about TV videos. We have prepared three different videos. We will take a look at each one of them. Your task is to comment-on and give your opinion about each video. Please bear in mind that these are not final videos. The videos we are going to watch today include some ideas for films that will be produced at the end of the research. First you will watch the video and write down your first thoughts and when you're done with this individual task, we will comment on each video as a group. It is really important for me that you don't comment on the video during the first watching because I would like each one of you to have the opportunity to create your own opinion.

MODERATOR: Make sure respondents don't talk or comment when they first evaluate the video. Remind them, if necessary, that the video is not the final version, so not much time should be spent commenting on the montage or actors. They should focus primarily on message, feelings, individual scenes etc.

COMMUNICATION TEST | 40 MIN

Objective: To assess how people understood and reacted to Video 1.

Let's watch the video.

MODERATOR: Give respondents blank pieces of paper so they can write down their first thoughts. Allow for silence whilst the group writes down their first impressions.

Please tell me what is your first impression? What was the first thing to cross your mind while you were watching this video?

MODERATOR: Let them talk spontaneously, don't interrupt.

What do you remember the most? What attracted your attention the most? Which scenes do you remember?

What did you like or not like? How did you feel while watching the video?

What was this video trying to tell you? What was its message, in your opinion?

Was there anything in this video that you didn't understand? Which part exactly?

Which slogan would you pick for this video? Why?

Let's watch it again.

Was there anything you missed in the first showing? What do you see now, that you didn't before?

What do you think is the main point of this video? What is the creator of this video trying to tell you? What are the main messages?

Which value does this video try to promote? How clear are those messages? What is not clear?

MODERATOR: Check if it attracts their attention and makes them think.

Is there anything else you like, but didn't mention before? Anything else that disturbs you?

What would you change? How?

How strongly did you identify with this video? Which part of the video did you most/least strongly identify with?

MODERATOR: Go through each scene of the video.

Which scenes did you not relate to? Which exactly? How did you feel while watching them?

Kiss scene: What did you think about this? What is upper limit of human interaction that is still appropriate for you/ still makes you feel comfortable? What about a hug only? Would that be better? What if there were two women, instead of men? Why yes/no?

We had a slogan. Do you remember it? What did it say?

MODERATOR: Find the written slogan to read out.

We've talked about message of the video. What the makers of the video tried to communicate to you is: "In everyday life I am free to make my own decisions and acts. With my friends, family or the person I love. That is why I would like to share my freedom with homosexually oriented people."

Can you get that message from this video? Which bit communicates that message most clearly? Are there other ways they could have shown that message? Any other ideas?

[The MODERATOR shows the next two videos, following a very similar set of questions]

CHOOSING THE BEST ONE | 10 MIN

Objective: sort all three videos

Please choose which video you thought was the best one. Rank all three of them.

MODERATOR: Let them do this task individually, then comment as a group.

How did you sort them? Which one do you think was the best one? Why?

What about the actors? Which set of actors do you prefer? Which one is more realistic? How come?

With which video can you identify the most? Why do you think that is?

OLD COMMUNICATIONS | 10 MIN

Objective: compare old and new

I will show you a few old printed ads. Please check them briefly.

MODERATOR: place A3 ads on the table

What do you think? What do you like / not like? Why?

These use a more 'rational' approach, while the campaign material we've commented on today is trying to evoke feelings. Which approach do you think is most successful? Suitable? Why?

MODERATOR: Please give me your final thoughts about today's group. Are there any comments / conclusions you would give to our client?

THANK YOU

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE

MODERATOR: approach passers-by to ask for help with some research.

Hey, I'm doing a study on public attitudes, I'd love it if you could fill out a short survey. There are just [five] questions, it'll only take a couple of minutes.

SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE | 3 MIN

Objective: collect basic information about the participant and screen out people who answer 1 or 7 to the screening question.

MODERATOR: Give people short questionnaire asking about age, gender, religion, education, followed by a screening question: on a scale of 1 to 7, 'how comfortable would you be having an LGBTI person as your neighbour' OR how much do you agree with the statement 'gay and lesbian people should be free to live their lives as they wish'.

Thanks so much, that's amazing. So this is part of a charitable research project and based on this survey you're exactly the person we would like to talk to. I wonder if I could have just another few minutes of your time to run something by you and get your thoughts on it? It would take about ten minutes and would be so useful for our research. We could chat out here or we could go in there and get a coffee. Would you like a coffee?

CONSENT | 2 MIN

Objective: confirm that the participant consents to the interview.

So as I said, this is a bit of research we're doing on behalf of a [human rights] charity [name the charity?] and we're just talking to people around the country to see what they think. I've got a short message here which I'd like to read out to you, and then I'm just going to ask you a few questions, like what you took from it, whether it makes sense, and what you think about it. There are no right or wrong answers to this at all, I'm not fishing for any kind of response.

I'm going to record our conversation, but it's just so I can remember what you say afterwards—don't worry this will never be used to identify you. You remain completely anonymous. And you have full control here, you can answer whatever you want to answer, and you can end the interview at any time. You mind saying, for the record, that this is all ok?

MODERATOR: Collect consent either in writing on just in a 'yes', captured on audio recorder.

COMMUNICATION TEST | 5 MIN

Objective: observe reactions to one message

First off I'm just going to read you a short message. Here goes ... [read message]. Here it is written down [hand paper to participant]. I'm going to just read it one more time [read message again].

MODERATOR: Use question prompts below. Whenever people start talking about something that seems interesting and relates to their views on family, nation, gender, sexuality and state, give them permission to explore these topics with follow up questions like: 'Could you tell me a bit more about that?, Why did you think that?, Why does that seem important?"

1. Comprehension
Did it make sense?
What do you think this message is trying to say?
Were there any bits you thought were unclear or confusing?
What's the main point it's trying to make?
Can you summarise this message back at me in just one sentence?

2. Thoughts
What do you think of this message?
What does this message make you think about?
Are there any bits of the message that you agree with? Why?
Are there any bits of the message that you don't agree with?
If you were in charge of editing this message, how would you tweak it?

3. Feelings
How do you feel about this message, generally?
When I was reading it were there any bits that made you feel good or bad?
Tell me about what you liked and didn't like in the message.

REFLECTING BACK | 2 MIN

Objective: check synthesis with participant.

So, if I can just summarise what I think you've said about this message, all-in-all [insert a short summary of what they said]. Have I got that about right? Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Right, we're done! Thanks so much, this is incredibly useful for my research. As I said earlier, everything you said here has been completely anonymous. If you want to get in touch or find out more about this research you can contact…

MODERATOR: Offer follow-up contact if they want to know more.

APPENDIX III: SURVEY ON GENDER, SEX AND SEXUALITY

This is a set of 35 statements used to evaluate attitudes towards people and relationships. Participants answered these questions after reading a campaign message. We compared whether different campaign messages affected the answers or not.

Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements on a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

1. There are only two biological sexes, male or female.

2. Anyone who is not naturally male or female is a 'freak of nature'.

3. All people identify as either male or female.

4. A person's gender identity might change over the course of their lifetime.*

5. These days there is not enough respect for the natural divisions between the sexes.

6. Some people are attracted to people of more than one gender.*

7. People who say they are bisexual are just confused about their sexual orientation.

8. A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family.

9. Boys should be encouraged to do things that boys usually do and girls should be encouraged to do things that girls usually do.

10. Children should be encouraged to do whatever they are interested in, regardless of their gender.*

11. One should stick firmly to national customs and tradition.

12. I believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships go against the moral of the nation.

13. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people pose a threat to the continued existence and reproduction of the nation.

14. It is important that every child has a mum and dad.

15. It doesn't matter what gender and sexuality a child's parent has.*

16. Same-sex couples should be allowed to enter into registered partnerships.*

17. Same-sex couples can form a family.*

18. Children should be brought up in strict discipline.

19. Youth needs strict discipline, strong will and willingness to fight for family and homeland.

20. This country needs a strong and courageous leader which the people will follow.

21. Obedience to authority is the greatest virtue which children today should learn.

22. Leading business positions should be held by men.

23. Human beings evolved so that men have authority in the family.

24. Good leadership can come from anyone, whatever their gender or sexuality.*

25. Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a sin.

26. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are the same as everyone else.*

27. I think that lesbian, gay and bisexual people share my values.*

28. Transgender people are fundamentally different to me.

29. I am willing to accept anyone, regardless of their gender identity.*

30. With homosexuality increasing in visibility I worry that children may think it's okay to experiment.

31. Homosexuality is a disease.

32. With all this talk of gender, I worry that girls will want to become boys and boys will want to become girls.

33. Homosexuality is very dangerous for society.

34. Gender equality ideas are a Western ideology designed to destroy our families and traditions.

35. Homosexuality has probably existed throughout human history.*

Questions with an asterix are of reverse scale.*

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COPYLEFT

It is easy to forget how mysterious
and mighty stories are.
They do their work in silence, invisibly.
They work with all the internal materials
of the mind and self.
They become part of you while changing you.
Beware the stories you read or tell;
subtly, at night, beneath the waters of consciousness,
they are altering your world.

Ben Okri

ILGA
EUROPE

Equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual,
trans and intersex people
in Europe

PIRC

PUBLIC
INTEREST
RESEARCH
CENTRE

how to
test your
communications