

20. Incorporating Intersectionality into Public Policy Evaluation

Ivàlua Collection

Practical guides on evaluation



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Incorporating Intersectionality into Public Policy Evaluation

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1. What is intersectionality??

Intersectionality is an analytical approach that examines how different axes of inequality intersect to produce specific forms of oppression and privilege. Incorporating this perspective into public policies makes it possible to acknowledge this complexity, address the underlying causes of inequality, and avoid one-size-fits-all responses that may reproduce or exacerbate existing gaps.

It is grounded on the idea that the lives of individuals and social groups cannot be comprehended through one single dimension, but they are shaped by the several interacting **social categories** (gender, ethnicity, social class) and their **interrelations**. At the same time, it is a political perspective, as it defends the need to transform power relationships and orient collective action towards social justice.

Origins of the concept

The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an African American lawyer and jurist, who used it to refer to the specific situations of discrimination experienced by African American working-class women, both in the occupational sphere and in relation to male-chauvinist violence. However, prior to Crenshaw, there were already other Chicano and African American groups and activists, such as the Combahee River Collective, who had already pointed out the importance of taking into account the interaction between the facts of being a woman, being African American, and being poor. Since then, intersectionality has developed into a broad theoretical, methodological and political paradigm for the study and denunciation of interpersonal and structural inequality. Only recently has it begun to be integrated into the field of public policy.

The intersectionality paradigm understands social categories, not as fixed or natural entities, but as **sociohistorical** constructions that condition the way people perceive each other and are socially interpreted. Thus, no one is defined by a single position—as a woman, a gay person or a white one—, but their life experience is configured by the interactions of multiple social positions and identities.

Intersectionality is a theoretical and analytical perspective that enables us to understand the complexity of social inequality and the diversity of human experience.

However, the fact of occupying different positions or having several identities does not necessarily imply that these give rise to unequal relations. For example, we can classify people by their eye colour or the colour of their hair, but these categories do not generate inequality. It is **sociohistorical contexts** that determine which of these differences will give rise to social hierarchies and will therefore constitute axes of inequality. These contexts include factors such as the economy, the law, history, and the migratory system (see graphic 1). In our society, certain social positions—like being a white, heterosexual man or having a high socioeconomic status—usually enjoy higher recognition than others—like being a racialized, LGBTI+ woman, or having a low socioeconomic status. It is through these axes of inequality that systematic forms of discrimination are configured, which place people in differentiated positions of privilege or oppression according to their social position. In order to analyse social inequality from an intersectional perspective, it is important to distinguish between three interrelated but non-equivalent concepts:

- **Social category** refers to those social classifications historically built that organise collective life and structure social identities. Some examples of these are *gender*, *social class*, *age*, and *ethnic* or *national origin*. These categories cannot be understood in isolation or in a neutral way, since they are mutually configured within the framework of situated power relations, which can adopt different social

positions: man, woman, gay, white... Neither social categories nor social positions are natural features; they are the result of sociohistorical processes that assign individuals different social positions within the social structure.

- **Inequality axis** is the mechanism by which a social category becomes relevant for the structuring of hierarchies and the production of unequal access to resources, rights, or opportunities. For example, *gender* is a category for social classification, but it only becomes an inequality axis when it produces hierarchical relationships between the different involved social positions: men, women, and trans and/or binary people.
- **Forms of discrimination - oppression** are practices, attitudes and norms by which the inequalities and/or discriminations associated with a particular axis are produced, maintained, or justified. For example, *sexism* is the form of oppression associated with gender; *racism*, with origin or ethnicity; *classism*, with socioeconomic status.

Table 1 presents an initial—non-comprehensive—inventory of inequality axes, categories, and forms of discrimination, which can be extended for the case of particular contexts where other axes, such as the linguistic one, the territorial one (rural/urban), or the migratory-generation one (first, second... generation) should be catered for.

No person is defined solely by a single position—such as being a woman, a lesbian, or a white person—but their life experience is shaped through the interaction of multiple social positions and identities.

Table 1: Relationships between Axes, Categories, and Forms of Discrimination

Social categories	Inequality axis	Forms of discrimination-oppression
Socioeconomic status	Social class	Classism
Sex, gender identity, gender expression	Sex-gender	Sexism, transphobia
Geographic origin, ethnicity, administrative situation	Ethnicity	Racism, antigipsyism, nativism
Sex-affective option	Sexuality	Heterosexism, LGBT-phobias
Physical or mental status	Motor-intellectual skills	Ableism
Age group, generation	Age – life cycle	Ageism, adultism
Belief option, religious identity	Religion - believes	Islamophobia, antisemitism

Source: compiled by the author.

Yet, intersectionality is not only about highlighting the existence of multiple inequalities, but it focuses on how these can operate in an interconnected fashion through the combination of different inequality axes. This produces specific situations of oppression and/or privilege that cannot be explained merely by adding one form of oppression after another. Thus, the life experience of a racialised woman in a racist and sexist society does not

amount to the addition of gender discrimination (sexism) and race discrimination (racism), but it is traversed by a specific kind of discrimination, which we shall call “**intersectional discrimination**” and which is different from that experienced by non-racialized women or by racialized men.

Intersectionality does not only warn us about **inequality between social groups**, but it also

DeGraffenreid v. General Motors

A paradigmatic example of how intersectional discriminations operate is offered by Crenshaw (1989) based on a legal case against General Motors, in which it becomes evident that the fact of analysing gender discrimination and race discrimination separately may render specific forms of intersectional discrimination invisible.

In 1976, a group of African American women sued General Motors for discriminatory hiring and layoff practices. They argued that GM did not hire black women before 1964, and that, once they started hiring them, they were consigned to clerical positions, traditionally reserved for white women. Additionally, in times of crisis, the initial layoffs affected African American working women disproportionately. Despite all the evidence, the court dismissed the case, arguing that the existent legislation only permitted to cope with gender and racial discrimination separately, without acknowledging the intersection of both. This legal case highlights how black women are rendered invisible in legal frameworks that fail to acknowledge intersectional discrimination.

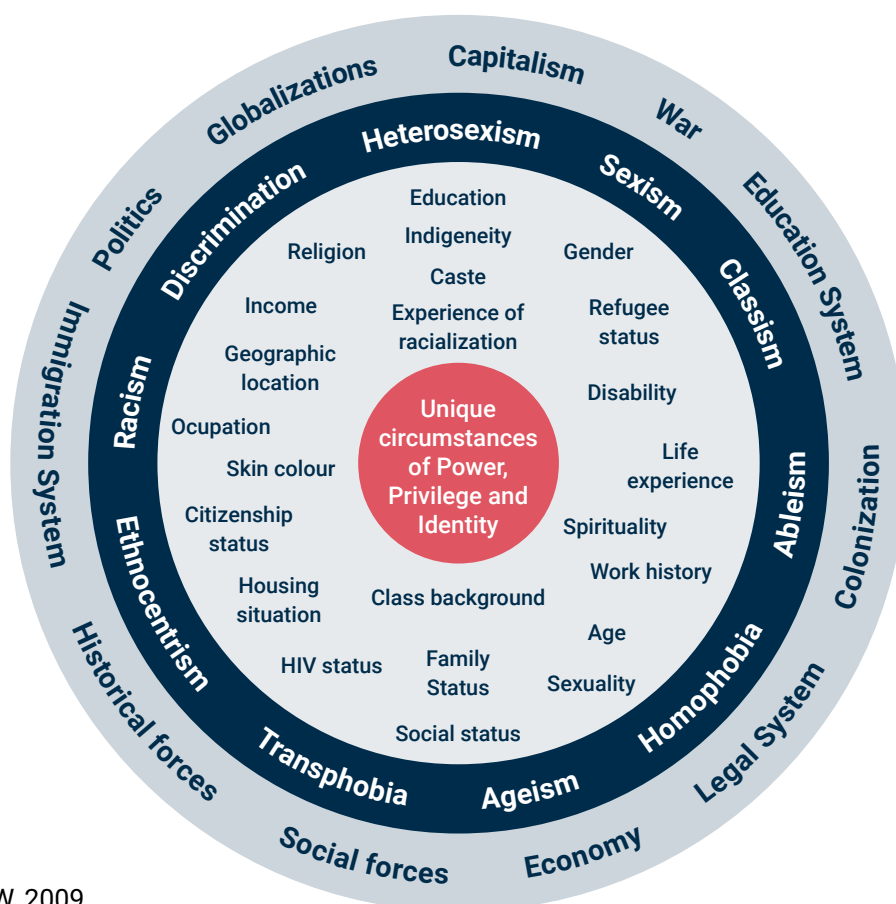
illuminates **inequality within social groups**. When we understand such groups as closed, homogenous identities—e.g., when we assume that all unaccompanied minors of migrant origin share the same experience in terms of gender, ethnicity, or sex-affective option—, we can inadvertently contribute to reproducing forms of exclusion which are both internal and external to the group. Conversely, if we conceived of these groups as permeable and internally diverse ones, the identities they involve can become spaces open to politicisation, agency, and social transformation.

Thus, social categories operate as structures of oppression upholding inequality and strongly conditioning people's material conditions of life. However, in certain contexts, these same categories can provide the foundation for collective organisation and the fight for one's rights. For

example, a woman's experience of racialisation is a source of exclusion and structural discrimination, but it can also be the point of departure for the articulation of resistances, the claiming of rights, and the forming of alliances with other groups in order to foster social change.

On the other hand, intersectionality **should not be understood as an approach which only applies to social groups in situations of oppression or social disadvantage**; it also allows us to understand those groups in privileged situations. To illustrate this dual approach, the metaphor of the **matrix of domination** has been used (Collins, 1990). This holds that inequality axes such as ethnicity, sex, social class, age, religion or sexual orientation should not be taken as individual features or additive factors, but rather as an interrelated set working in a relational way within a broader social hierarchy (see graphic 1).

Graphic 1: The wheel of privilege and oppression



Source: CRIAW, 2009

Although all of us are included in this matrix, **we occupy different positions depending on our privileges and oppressions**. Thus, a person can be oppressed in one axis and, at the same time, be privileged in another. For example, a white lesbian woman of high socioeconomic status can feel socially discriminated against because of her gender and her sex-affective option, but be in a situation of privilege in relation to a racialised heterosexual man of low socioeconomic status when it comes to renting a home, as, in this context, racial and class prejudices usually outweigh sexist and lesbophobic ones.

As the metaphor of the matrix of domination suggests, intersectionality is not restricted to discriminations experienced by individuals, but it also points to the need to analyse how inequality operates at different **levels** or in different systems: at the **interpersonal** level (relationships between people), at the **cultural** one (ideologies, values, prejudices, and stereotypes), and at the **administrative** one (law, public services, public policies...).

Interactions between all these levels take place in contexts that are traversed by structural systems of power—patriarchy, colonialism, racism, heterosexism—that have organised the different forms of oppression and privilege throughout history. These systems reproduce themselves through, and are incarnated in, social institutions such as laws, public policies, or mass media, which can contribute to the maintenance or the questioning of all these hierarchies.

Also, it should be noted that changes at one level may have an impact on the other levels, which can lead to new forms of inequality. An example of this can be found in immigration policies, where the difference between being in a regular or irregular administrative situation can give rise to a form of discrimination that comes on top of, and reinforces, those due to ethnic or national origin. Additionally, we should take into account the importance of **time** and **space**. Actually, there are social categories whose meaning changes as a function of time (age) or space (administrative situation); others may

alternate situations of oppression and privilege (life-cycle stages), while still others, like religious beliefs or ethnicity, usually experience fewer changes.

Finally, we must point out that intersectionality, beyond constituting a theoretical or methodological perspective, has been conceived of as a tool for the fostering of social justice. Thus, intersectional analysis demands a critical, situated, and holistic approach to reality, i.e., an understanding of how the different forms of oppression—gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability or origin—overlap and become apparent in concrete ways in people's lives, as well as an awareness of the power structures that sustain them and the need to transform them to achieve real equality. A situated approach means acknowledging that all analyses adopt a concrete social and historical position, and there are no neutral perspectives.

Intersectionality and public policy

Academic literature usually distinguishes between **structural intersectionality** and **political intersectionality**. The former refers to how failing to acknowledge intersectional inequalities may become an obstacle for certain groups to gain access to services and resources suited to their specific needs, an issue we have already dealt with in the previous section. The latter, on the other hand, stresses the way in which social movements and public policies have tended to prioritise certain dimensions of oppression like gender and class, defined from the perspective of an implicitly white and cisgender subject.¹ This may imply the exclusion of individuals and groups who are located at the intersection of other oppression situations when it comes to fulfilling their needs. Such criticism not only puts into question the hierarchisation of oppressions, but also the way these are conceptualised and the standpoint from which they are formulated, as well as the social and political impacts that these definitions have for the involved social groups.

1. A person who identifies with the gender assigned to him or her at birth according to his or her biological features

In fact, public policies have a relevant role in coping with inequality, as they determine the ability for intervention, regulate access to resources and services, and determine their distribution and redistribution, as well as their use. Failing to incorporate an intersectional perspective in the design, implementation, and assessment of public policies may imply that measures which have been conceived of as a means to reduce inequality end up generating new ones. This can happen both because certain inequalities have been rendered invisible in

the diagnosis stage, and because some undesired effects of policies on certain groups situated at the intersection of several inequality axes have not been considered in the design and implementation stages.

Within the theory of intersectionality, three ways of approaching inequality in public policy have been identified: a uniaxial approach, an approach based on multiple discriminations, and a properly intersectional approach (see Table 2).

Table 2: Typology of Public Policy Approaches in Addressing Discrimination

	Uniaxial	Multiple discriminations	Intersectional
Number of axes at play	One	More than one	More than one
Relationship between axes	None	Hierarchical - additive	Open - interdependent
Internal configuration of each category	Homogeneous	Homogeneous	Diverse
Relationship between the individual and the institutional levels	Static - unidirectional	Static - unidirectional	Dynamic- interactional
Approach to intersectionality	Rhetorical or absent	Additive	Intersectionality as paradigm / research design

Source: Adapted from Hancock (2013) and Coll-Planas (2019).

Many public policies are often based on **uniaxial approaches**, i.e., they focus on a single inequality axis (e.g., gender or migration) or on a specific social group (such as disabled people or children in situations of social risk). They usually perceive each of these groups as fixed, homogeneous, invariable entities, while their relationship with the institutional level is seen as unidirectional and, consequently, the institutions involved would have a uniform effect on individuals. In these cases, the use of intersectionality—when it comes up—is merely rhetorical, that is, there is mention of it, but it is not really incorporated into the policies. So, the fact that a particular policy focuses on a specific group

Intersectionality is a theoretical and analytical perspective that allows us to understand the complexity of social inequality and the diversity of human experience.

where several categories overlap (for example, LGBTI+ youth) does not make it intersectional if it ends up adopting a homogenising view of the group involved.

This model presents different drawbacks:

- **Homogenisation of identities:** categories are seen as fixed in time, and intracategorical diversity is not catered for; thus, people belonging to a particular social group are treated as if they shared the same needs and as if these were not determined by each person's context, which may leave out specific situations of discrimination.
- **Omission of intersectional strata:** those individuals who combine several forms of vulnerability—e.g., young LGBTI+ women of migrant origin—are excluded from the frameworks of action or may be given inadequate responses because they do not fit within traditional categories.
- **Blind spots in institutional organisation:** when the administration is organised like watertight compartments (equality, welfare, LGBTI+, etc.), it is more difficult to identify how to cope with people who belong to more than one field of action, which may reinforce situations of exclusion.

Therefore, it is necessary:

1. **To detect the combinations of inequality axes** in a population, taking into account gender, origin, sexual orientation, and other factors.
2. **To define who is responsible** for tending to these combinations: it can be an intersectoral unit, a cross-cutting programme, or an interdepartmental work group.
3. **To guarantee effective access to resources and services:** to make sure that people in situations of intersectional vulnerability have access to the proper resources and services, preventing them from being caught in the “gaps between departments”.

To solve these shortcomings, **multiple-discrimination approaches** were proposed.

Policies based on a multiple-discrimination approach acknowledge the existence of different inequality axes that may concur in a particular situation. However, these axes are often dealt with in parallel, without considering their intersections. On the other hand, inequalities are handled in a homogeneous and separate way, while the relationship with the institutional level is still seen as unidirectional. This kind of approach may not solve the previous problems and may even generate new ones:

1. **Homogenisation of discriminations:** although the concurrence of more than one inequality axis is contemplated—in contrast with uniaxial policies—the different axes are also handled in a static and homogeneous way.
2. **Hierarchical and additive approach:** inequalities are seen in a hierarchical and/or additive way, and it is understood that there is a pre-established relationship between inequality axes by which one of them has ascendancy over the others, or that the concurrence of two inequality axes can be explained by adding both oppressions. For example, in a public policy for women's labour market insertion, attention to women in general is prioritized as a vulnerable group, but differences between women are not considered. In this way, it is assumed that all women have the same experience of inequality just because they are women, while the impact of other axes, such as racialisation, social class or administrative situation, is overlooked, or directly ignored. This implies a hierarchisation of factors in which gender is seen as the central one, while all the other axes are only superficially added (additive approach), instead of analysing how they interact with each other to produce specific inequalities.
3. **Competition between axes:** one of the problems with this approach is that it often leads to asking oneself about the hierarchy of axes, i.e., trying to decide which is the most important axis, which may end up giving rise to an “oppression Olympics” (Hancock, 2017), where different social groups compete to obtain a place of prevalence for the axes they are affected by in order to gain access to resources.

Finally, we have a third approach that takes intersectionality into account insofar as it starts out by acknowledging that the different **inequalities do**

not operate in isolation, but are configured and expressed through the interaction of multiple inequality axes.² Thus, this approach does not merely consist of cumulatively adding different inequality axes, but it analyses how **they combine in specific contexts to produce particular forms of discrimination and privilege.** At the same time, it makes it possible to recognise the complexity of social positions, since one and the same person can be simultaneously found in situations of oppression and privilege, depending on the context or the inequality axis under consideration. This perspective helps us understand that social structures do not only produce visible inequalities, but also expectations and norms that can have negative effects on apparently privileged groups. For example, it allows us to analyse how the traditional models of masculinity can have negative effects on men, such as less propensity to look for help in the face of mental health problems or to resort to preventive health services, due to stereotypes associated with male strength or self-sufficiency. Thus, the focus here is not only on “what” (which groups), but also on “how” and “why” inequalities are produced and, above all, what structures uphold them.

This model represents a commitment to a complex and contextual comprehension of inequalities, and it requires:

- **Acknowledging complexity:** it does not assume that people belonging to a social group share a homogeneous experience but stresses the way in which different social positionings within the same group interact.
- **Analysing power structures:** beyond detecting inequalities, the focus is on identifying the institutional, cultural, and social mechanisms that produce and reproduce them.

- **Incorporating reflexivity and participation:** the process of policy design, implementation, and assessment should include the voices and experiences of the involved individuals, as well as teams who are aware of their own positionality and possible biases.
- **Defining institutional responsibilities:** determining who is responsible for tackling intersectional inequalities through the establishment of intersectional units, cross-cutting programmes, or mechanisms for coordination between different departments.
- **Guaranteeing effective access to resources and services:** making sure that people in situations of intersectional vulnerability have real access to the proper resources and services, preventing them from being left unattended through lack of coordination between departments.

Another relevant question when adopting an intersectional perspective in public policy is the need to ask ourselves about the root causes of inequality situations and not only about the associated effects. Thus, it is considered that tending to the mechanisms that cause inequality is as necessary as catering for the specific effects of this inequality as they manifest in a particular social group. In fact, not all inequalities must necessarily be intersectional in origin, but their effects may be so. For example, the existence of a

Inequalities do not act in isolation, but are configured and expressed through the interaction between multiple axes of inequality.

2. Among the different approaches to the incorporation of an intersectional perspective into the analysis of public policies, in this guide we shall follow that of the Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA), developed by Hankivsky et al. (2012). Methodologically, IBPA combines two key components: a set of guiding principles (see Table 3) and different guiding questions, divided into descriptive questions (to understand how the problem is defined and constructed) and transforming ones (to explore alternatives and actions to reduce inequality). This structure allows us to adapt the analyses carried out to different contexts, times, and actors in the political cycle, with the aim of producing more inclusive and contextualised responses, properly suited to the handling of discriminatory logics.

ban on abortion affects all the women in a country; so, originally, it is not an intersectional discrimination/oppression, but its effects vary depending on the age, the administrative situation, or the social class of the affected women. In contrast, there are other situations of discrimination/oppression that can be intersectional from the origin, such as campaigns of forced sterilisation directed against women from a particular ethnic origin, social class or functional disability/diversity.

Public policies must **acknowledge the diverse forms of inequality** that may affect people. The goal must be to always incorporate an intersectional approach, i.e., to recognise how different inequality axes (such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) combine with each other in each context. Yet, in a context of lack of resources, it may be necessary to prioritise certain axes. Therefore, it is essential:

1. **To make explicit which inequality axes** ought to be catered for and **why** they were chosen.
For example, an occupational policy can be

directed at women in rural areas because it has been found that they are affected by an unemployment rate which is higher than the average.

2. **To mention what other axes have not been considered, and to analyse how the selected policy could affect them.**

For example, if only gender and geographical area are taken into account, it is easy to overlook the fact that, among those women, there are also racialised or disabled ones, and the actions taken may have different effects on them.

To sum up, it is necessary to be transparent about the actual goals of a policy (which axes it includes and why) and to **assess its possible impact** on those axes that have not been included in its design. As a way to make these recommendations more specific, Table 3 presents the guiding principles of intersectionality, which can be useful as a reference guide for the design, implementation, and assessment of public policies.

Table 3: Guiding principles of intersectionality

Intersecting categories	People do not belong to a single social group (like women, youths, or migrants), but they have multiple identities (like a disabled migrant woman), which combine and produce differentiated experiences of power and inequality. Public policies must take into account all these combinations to avoid overly general responses that invisibilise particular social groups.
Multilevel analysis	Intersectionality analyses how inequalities are produced and interact at different societal levels: macro (institutions and policies at a global and national level), meso or intermediate (institutions or policies on a provincial or regional scale), and micro (community institutions and policies, including individual action). The relationships between all these different levels are not predetermined, but emerge in the course of the research process that connects structure, identity, and representation.
Power	Inequalities do not appear by chance but are the result of power relations and oppression/privilege structures (such as racism, male chauvinism or classism). These relations shape the treatment delivered to people and determine who has greater opportunities and possibilities of realising their rights. Public policies must pay attention to these imbalances in order to correct them and so as not to reinforce existing inequalities.



Reflexivity	When policies are designed or assessed, it is important that the individuals responsible for them ask themselves how their own social position and perspective may influence what is considered a problem or a solution. This is key to achieving better-quality assessments and to not assuming that there is only a single valid vision.
Context	The meaning of an inequality or need may vary depending on the historical moment and the place. For example, what women in a community worry about today may differ substantially from what their mothers worried about thirty years ago. It is necessary to adapt public policies to each specific context to avoid homogenising solutions.
Plurality of sources of knowledge and methodologies	Not all relevant knowledge has its origin in the institutions or in the academic sphere. Listening to those who directly experience the situations that must be addressed may bring in different perspectives, while incorporating this kind of knowledge may improve both the quality and equity of public policies, avoiding overly technocratic solutions.
Social justice	Les polítiques públiques no solament han de reparar els efectes de les desigualtats, sinó que han de transformar les condicions que les generen. L'objectiu és que tothom pugui viure una vida digna, amb drets i oportunitats, sense posar en risc el planeta. Si no es qüestionen aquestes condicions, les intervencions corren el risc de cronificar les injustícies.
Equity	No totes les diferències són injustes, però quan una diferència —com ara l'origen o el gènere— comporta menys oportunitats o més obstacles, es pot parlar de desigualtat. Les polítiques públiques han d'identificar aquestes situacions i actuar per corregir-les, en lloc d'augmentar les bretxes existents.

Source: adapted from Hankivsky et al. (2014).



Additional resources

Rodó de Zárate, Maria (2021). *Interseccionalitat. Desigualtat, lloc i emocions*. Tigre de Paper.

Viveros Vigoya, Mara. (2016). "La interseccionalidad: una aproximación situada a la dominación". *Debate Feminista*, 52, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.df.2016.09.005>

2. Why assess with an intersectional perspective?

Evaluating through an intersectional lens allows for a better understanding of the differentiated effects of public policies on diverse social groups and helps uncover inequalities that remain invisible under homogeneous approaches. This perspective enhances the quality of evaluations, strengthens social justice, and supports the development of more appropriate recommendations that avoid reproducing existing inequalities.

Assessment is a key activity in the cycle of public policies, as it makes it possible to produce new knowledge in order to improve policy design and implementation. When it adopts an intersectional perspective, it is possible to obtain **more thorough and profound information about the workings and the results of the interventions**. This produces, on one hand, better-quality assessment, and, on the other, allows us to obtain information and recommendations on how to evolve towards equitable and transformative public policies that do not reproduce existing inequalities. Thus, adopting an intersectional perspective is not only a normative requirement for public powers' interventions, but an **ethical and political commitment** to social justice and social transformation.

Moreover, an intersectional lens allows us to recognise that people may not only find themselves in situations of vulnerability or advantage, but they can be simultaneously in positions of oppression and privilege, depending on the context and the inequality axes cutting across them. For example, a woman with a college education and Spanish nationality can be in an advantaged position due to her educational level and her administrative status, but, at the same time, she can experience gender discrimination in the labour market. Identifying these situations is crucial to understand the real effects of public policies and to avoid simplifying responses.

Example of an application of intersectionality in the sphere of care

Care work is a sphere with a clear intersectional dimension: there are multiple social categories involved, such as gender, social class, migrant origin, administrative status, and diverse skills. However, many public policies designed for this sphere do not include all this complexity, which may contribute to the reproduction (or even strengthening) of existing inequalities.

A paradigmatic case of this is the Dependency Law, which acknowledges the right to receive aid in situations of dependency, but it is often based on a familyist logic (Carrasco, 2001; Martínez-Buján, 2014) and assumes that care would be provided in the home and, in fact, delegates to women the responsibility for it.

This inequality is not only the result of informal social dynamics, but it is well rooted in the legal and institutional frameworks regulating care. Thus, both the Dependency Law and the legal framework for domestic work contribute to the institutionalisation of the social and ethnic division of care work, structurally reproducing inequality.



For example, policies for work-life conciliation, such as subsidies to hire carers, do not take into account the working conditions and administrative situation of migrant women, who are the ones that mostly perform this kind of work. Consequently, such policies overlook the material realities of people who experience the intersection of several vulnerabilities.

Such an imbalance becomes even more evident when we analyse who is able to delegate care work and who is forced to take it on. Middle- and high-class people can transfer such work to—mostly migrant—women in precarious situations. This process of “responsibility avoidance” is based on privileges of class and origin, which allow some individuals to become partially liberated from care work while others are forced to take it on, often in unfair circumstances.

Thus, the care-work example reveals the importance of incorporating an intersectional perspective in public policy evaluation to identify differentiated and structural effects that would otherwise be rendered invisible.

Next, we shall present a few examples to explain why **adopting an intersectional perspective improves the quality of assessment**:

1. **It makes it possible to acknowledge diversity.** We must be aware that the effects of public policies are not homogeneous, but they may vary depending on the context. Analysing how these interactions become manifest in people's life trajectories allows us to better grasp social complexity and avoid generalisations that invisibilise different realities. For example, the combination of gender, age, origin and class can place young, racialised women from the outskirts and white working-class men subject to the pressures derived from the stereotypes of masculinity in very different positions. This kind of analysis allows us to understand how the same structures can give rise to advantages and disadvantages depending on each person's social position, so that the assessments carried out reflect social complexity better and avoid generalisations that render whole social groups invisible.
2. **It makes it possible to identify and correct biases in the generation of knowledge.** Assessing is not a neutral process. The initial approach, the questions asked, the decision to collect certain information instead of others, the sources used—to give just a few examples—are all traversed by previous prejudices, assumptions, and ideologies. An intersectional perspective helps us to expose biases such as the overlooking of knowledge, experiences or perspectives of traditionally marginalised groups. Questioning who defines

what counts as valid knowledge and how this is applied, and incorporating new methodologies and perspectives, produces assessments that are more rigorous and more effective when it comes to fostering the necessary transformations—that is, more efficient eventually.

3. **It makes it possible to identify unforeseen negative impacts, undesired effects, or excluding consequences.** Acknowledging that public policies do not affect everyone in the same way is essential to anticipate their adverse effects. For example, an application process for public benefits that requires administrative documentation may exclude people in an irregular administrative situation and, in this way, contribute to the perpetuation of social and economic inequalities. However, undesired effects may also affect seemingly privileged groups when the interaction between inequality axes produces new forms of inequality. For instance, the digitalisation of administrative procedures may give rise to inequalities not only between people with different educational levels, but also among people of high socioeconomic status who find obstacles to accessing essential services because of their age. Intersectional assessment allows us to identify these biases and offer recommendations to correct them.

The effects of policies are not homogeneous, but can vary depending on the context

4. It makes it possible to better adapt

recommendations to the action context. Using an intersectional perspective does not only involve describing inequalities but also making suggestions on how to reduce them. Thus, an educational policy that distributes resources to every student may not be enough for youths in situations of social and economic vulnerability. Intersectional assessment must identify these differences and offer recommendations aimed at adapting public policies to the different possible contexts. For example, if a public health policy does not take into account linguistic or cultural barriers, its benefits will probably not reach all potential recipients effectively.

5. It contributes to preventing the reproduction of inequalities. An intersectional approach allows us to understand how different inequality axes interact with and co-constitute each other, while it contributes to exposing other forms of inequality that would remain invisible if we used another perspective. For example, an employment policy that only takes into account the gender gap may overlook specific barriers experienced by women in an irregular administrative situation, who are

subject to different discriminations from those affecting women in a legal administrative situation.

6. It fosters accountability from a social justice perspective. Thus, it improves the transparency and legitimacy of the assessment process, showing whether the applied policies have taken into account the diverse realities, needs, and inequalities that exist, and improves accountability before both the general public and the involved social groups.

Additionally, it should be noted that applying an intersectional perspective is a normative requirement. The incorporation of intersectionality is required by legal instruments at the international, national, regional, and local levels. Intersectionality is implicitly or explicitly contemplated in documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), European directives, and non-discrimination and equality laws, which urge public authorities to take into account the interactions between different inequality axes in the design and assessment of public policies.

The intersectional perspective helps to make visible biases such as the disregard for the knowledge, experiences or perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups.



Additional resources

Coll-Planas, Gerard i Solà-Morales, Roser. 2019. *Guia per incorporar la interseccionalitat a les polítiques públiques locals*. Ajuntament de Terrassa.

3. What does it mean to incorporate an intersectional perspective into the assessment process?

Incorporating an intersectional lens into evaluation means analysing how multiple axes of inequality interact within a public policy and the differentiated impacts they produce across social groups, moving beyond homogeneous or merely additive approaches. This perspective steers the evaluation process toward social justice, integrates reflexivity, and enables the identification of whether policies reinforce or reduce structural inequalities.

The incorporation of an intersectional perspective into the assessment of public policies is still a very recent, barely theorised, evolving field (Hankivsky and Cormier, 2011), although there has been talk about it for over a decade. Yet, adopting an intersectional perspective allows us to expose certain aspects that have often been overlooked in traditional assessment practices, such as grasping the differential impacts of policies on diverse population groups by considering their intersections, and improving our understanding of how inequalities are configured, intersect with each other, and remain within the framework of a particular public policy (Hankivsky and Jordan-Zavhery, 2019). Besides this, and contrary to traditional assessments, where impacts are evaluated in a cumulative fashion among social groups understood as homogeneous, separate entities (women-men, youths-adults...), an intersectional perspective brings to light intragroup inequalities for every social position, which **requires a critical and reflexive approach**.

What is assessed?

Assessment with an intersectional perspective can be applied to any sphere of public policy (housing, education, mobility, security...) and at any level of intervention (universal or focused). This means that, to be able to assess from an intersectional perspective it is not necessary that the policies that one wishes to assess are addressed to vulnerable groups or are designed with an intersectional outlook, although both elements make the evaluation process easier. **What distinguishes the incorporation of an intersectional look is not so much what is assessed as how it is assessed and, above all, what it is assessed for.**

Applying an intersectional perspective allows us to make visible aspects that have often been overlooked in traditional evaluations.

What is it assessed for?

The goal of assessing with an intersectional perspective is to identify and reveal how the different inequality axes interact with each other within a specific public policy and in relation to the prevailing power structures. It is a question of analysing how these intersections affect certain social groups and what impact they have on the lives of their members. All in all, the goal is to examine whether the policy in question has contributed to reinforcing or reducing social and structural inequalities, and whether it has produced processes of exclusion or privilege for particular social groups.

Moreover, an intersectional lens allows us to acknowledge that one same policy can produce situations of privilege and exclusion at the same

time. For example, a food-grant policy for children may be useful to guarantee child food security, but if it is not accompanied by an adaptation of school menus, it may end up penalising those individuals who, for cultural or religious reasons, have specific eating practices.

Therefore, the intersectional perspective is not only an analytical tool to do better-quality assessments, nor is it synonymous with incorporating diversity, but it must be explicitly oriented towards **social justice** and the **transformation of power relations**, inside and outside politics. In this sense, incorporating an intersectional perspective cannot be a mere add-on that ends up depoliticising and neutralising the critical and transformative potential of intersectionality.

(Fictitious) example of assessment of policies for sexual and reproductive health

A traditional kind of assessment concludes that the healthcare system offers proper access to contraception services because 85% of women aged 18 to 45 years have had access to anticonception methods in the last year. This analysis, however, is carried out taking “women” as a homogeneous group, without distinguishing, for example, between different origins, social classes, or administrative situations. An assessment which adopts an intersectional perspective shows that, even though 85% of women have had access to contraception methods, only 58% of women of migrant origin and irregular administrative situation, and 2% of women with a disability have actually accessed this kind of service. Also, it is revealed that young women from rural environments or stigmatised communities often encounter obstacles associated with their lack of knowledge of their rights and the lack of cultural adaptation of the services offered. An intersectional lens, thus, reveals all these structural inequalities and guarantees equitable, effective access to all women.

What distinguishes the incorporation of the intersectional perspective is not so much what is evaluated, but how and above all why it is evaluated.

Table 4: What Is and What Is Not an Assessment from an Intersectional Perspective

What it is	What it is not
It is oriented towards improving social justice, transforming power and privilege relations inside and outside politics, and increasing the relevance, equity, and efficacy of public policy.	It is not a mere technical or neutral revision. Although it is said to incorporate an intersectional perspective, it does so simply to “fulfil all the requirements” and ignores how public policies can reproduce existing inequalities.
It takes a critical and systemic perspective that analyses the structural context in which public policies operate and where the different inequality axes are addressed in an interrelated way, as concrete expressions of the prevailing power relations.	It is not a mere disaggregation of data by sex, age or origin that does not analyse intersections, context, or their effects.
It takes into account that the different social categories (gender, ethnicity, class...) are not homogeneous, and that social positions (woman, white, higher class) do not have a fixed meaning, but can change depending on the context, i.e., their impact and relevance can vary depending on the situation, historical moment, etc.	It does not assume pre-established definitions of social categories.
It incorporates reflexivity and epistemological watchfulness into the operation of the assessment team.	It does not avoid reflexivity by assuming that the technical expertise of the assessment team prevents the existence of biases.
It takes into account the workings of different relationships of oppression and privilege.	It does not exclusively focus on the most disadvantaged groups of the population.
An intersectional perspective presides over the different stages of assessment.	It is not only contemplated during the design or analysis stages.

Source: compiled by the author.

Degrees and scenarios in the incorporation of an intersectional perspective

When it comes to incorporating an intersectional perspective in public policy, we can distinguish between different degrees of depth and different scenarios where it may be applied. On the one hand, **public policies may have been designed and implemented with the highest or the lowest level of intersectional sensitivity**, which will affect their assessment process itself. On the other hand,

factors such as the kind of task that has been commissioned, the availability of data, and the technical and analytical skill of the assessment team will all directly affect the ways in which intersectionality can be integrated into assessment.

Depending on the degree of incorporation of the intersectional perspective into the assessment process, we can first distinguish between assessments that do not incorporate it in a substantial way and others that do integrate it in varying degrees of depth and analytical consistency. Thus, among those **assessment practices that do**

not incorporate the intersectional perspective—although they may make a rhetorical or instrumental use of it—, we find:

- **Homogenising assessment** is that which is based on the assumption of a homogeneous population, either in universal terms or focusing on a specific group. For example, the assessment of a programme for the labour-market insertion of women of migrant origin cannot be considered to be intersectional just because it is addressed to a social group in which several inequality axes converge. This can contribute to the invisibilisation of the inequalities present within this group, or it can naturalise certain inequalities, for example those linked to ethnicity.
- **Uniaxial assessment** is the one that privileges a single inequality axis (for example, gender). In this sense, what many assessments which are defined as “concerning gender and intersectional” do is to prioritise the evaluation of gender issues and deal with the remaining inequalities in a subordinate way. Thus, we cannot classify as intersectional any assessment that does not take into account other interactions.
- **Multiaxial assessment** is the one that, despite considering several inequality axes in a non-subordinate form, assesses them separately and in an additive way. For example, we can evaluate a policy by including gender, class, and origin in the process, but if we are not able to determine the interactions between the different axes, we cannot call this kind of assessment an intersectional one.

On the other hand, we can distinguish **three forms of assessment that do incorporate the intersectional perspective**, in different degrees of depth and coherence:

- **The descriptive application of intersectionality** explores the criss-crossing of social categories, their different interactions and the effects that these can have on specific groups, although it does not go so far as to analyse the root causes or structural dynamics. It represents the first degree in the application of an intersectional perspective, and it is the level at which most

public policy evaluations incorporating an intersectional lens can be placed. An example of this can be a housing policy that takes into consideration several inequality axes—such as gender, geographical origin, ethnicity, or social class—and their interactions, with the aim of identifying differentiated impacts, such as the barriers to access experienced by particular social groups.

- **The structural application of intersectionality** not only analyses the intersections of different social categories and their differentiated impacts, but also the systemic and structural effects that derive from them. This is a more complex approach than the descriptive one, as it requires more advanced analytical techniques and data that are not easily available. Returning to the example of housing policies, a structural assessment would not only identify the specific barriers affecting particular groups, but would also analyse how these inequalities are amplified by the interaction with other public policies—such as migration, employment, or urban planning policies—and by symbolic dynamics such as ethnic prejudice or territorial stigma.
- **The transformative application of intersectionality** is the one that not only considers the structural effects of public policies but is explicitly oriented towards the transformation of the system of inequalities. It represents the most ambitious and nuanced degree of intersectionality, and it is not always feasible, as it requires a high level of commitment on the part of the assessment unit, the team of evaluators, and the administration responsible for the policy under scrutiny. This kind of assessment is oriented towards the transformation of public policies in order to evolve towards greater social justice, the reduction of existing inequalities, and greater involvement of the social groups concerned in the deployment of public policies, which is not always possible within a public-administration logic.

Table 5: Different Kinds of Public Policy Evaluation in Relation to Intersectionality

	Kind of assessment	Description	Focus	Implications
Not (or just rhetorically) intersectional	Homogenising	Policies are assessed assuming homogeneous populations. No specific inequality axis is considered.	Universalist / Particularist	Risk of invisibilising inequalities and reproducing dominant norms.
	Uniaxial	One single inequality dimension is privileged.	Single-focus	Reveals and analyses certain inequalities but overlooks or minimises others.
	Multiaxial	Different dimensions are considered (gender, class, ethnicity), but they are analysed separately.	Additive / Comparative	As the intersections between axes are not considered, it may end up invisibilising certain inequalities.
Intersectional	Intersectional descriptive	Intersections between different inequality axes are considered, but they are analysed at the individual or interpersonal level.	Relational / Interpersonal	It tends to the intersections but not to the power structures producing inequalities, and it does not problematise public responsibility.
	Intersectional structural	Assessment examines how systems of oppression and privilege interact with each other and configure political and social effects.	Systemic	It makes it possible to analyse the reproduction of systemic inequality patterns but requires data to be disaggregated and more robust methods of analysis to be used.
	Intersectional transformative	Assessment is explicitly oriented towards social justice. It promotes the participation of the affected groups, beyond the role of mere informants, at all evaluation stages.	Change	It requires expertise and political will so that its recommendations give rise to processes of change in public policies and institutions.

Source: compiled by the author.

The incorporation of an intersectional perspective depends both on the political and institutional framework in which the assessment is commissioned and on the evaluator's critical positioning and analytical skills. The interaction between both elements may give rise to different forms of assessment, as is shown in Table 3. However, all these assessment models should be understood as ideal types that can be used for self-evaluation and guidance regarding the direction one wants to follow, because, in practice, the models used tend to be more hybrid, combining elements from different approaches depending on the context, the available resources, and the institutional leeway allowed.

Thus, when neither the unit commissioning the assessment nor the evaluating team are sufficiently sensitive to intersectionality, we find forms of assessment that do not really include an intersectional perspective, such as the homogenising, the uniaxial, or the multiaxial ones. Although these may adopt an intersectional language, its use will be superficial or instrumental. Additionally, when the commissioning unit, but not the assessment team, has an intersectional approach, there is a risk that the assessment remains at the uniaxial or multiaxial level and does not go deeper into the structural interdependencies between inequalities, because, despite the

institutional willingness, the lack of specific skills may limit the analytical and critical quality of the process.

However, when the assessment team is sensitive to intersectionality but the commissioning unit is not, the evaluation will probably be limited to a descriptive intersectional one, identifying the intersections and inequalities that are present but with no real capacity to alter the design or the content of the commissioned task, often due to a lack of information, time, and resources to produce in-depth analyses, or to a lack of political leeway. In these cases, the assessment team should stress what limitations exist for the assessment, as well as the need to implement training programmes to widen the intersectional **perspective** of the commissioning units. Finally, when both actors have an intersectional perspective, there is the possibility of carrying out genuinely intersectional assessments, at different levels of depth, be it descriptive, structural, or transformative assessment, depending on the knowledge requirements, the available time, the resources, the quality of the gathered information, and the political willingness of the administration. All in all, the intersectional quality of the assessment will depend on the combination of the actors' political will and analytical sensitivity.

Table 6: Assessment Scenarios Depending on the Units' Intersectional Sensitivity

	Commissioning unit does not have an intersectional look	Commissioning unit has an intersectional look
The assessment team does not revise assessment practices with an intersectional perspective	Assessments do not adopt an intersectional perspective. There is a rhetorical or instrumental use of intersectionality. Possibilities depending on the degree of intersectional sensitivity: • Homogenising • Uniaxial • Multiaxial	Assessments hardly take an intersectional perspective, despite political willingness, due to a lack of abilities within the assessment team. Possibilities depending on the degree of intersectional sensitivity: • Uniaxial • Multiaxial



The assessment team revises assessment practices with an intersectional perspective	Although the assessment team is competent to carry out assessments with an intersectional perspective, these cannot have transformative effects due to a lack of political willingness. Possibilities depending on the degree of intersectional sensitivity: • Intersectional descriptive	The degree of incorporation of an intersectional perspective will depend on the available time and resources, and the quality of the data. Possibilities depending on the degree of intersectional sensitivity: • Intersectional descriptive • Intersectional structural • Intersectional transformative
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Source: adapted from *Guia pràctica 18* (De Quintana Medina, 2021).

Finally, adopting an intersectional perspective requires different levels of shared responsibility between the commissioning unit and the

assessment team. The political willingness involved takes shape in a set of responsibilities that are presented in detail in Table 4.

Table 7: Main and Secondary Responsibilities of Assessment Units

Assessment unit	Main responsibilities	Secondary responsibilities
Unit commissioning the assessment	• To commission an assessment that explicitly includes the adoption of an intersectional perspective. • To include the analysis of the implications of the assessed policy for the different inequality axes at play. • To identify the key actors that should be included in the assessment process. • To incorporate the results of the assessment into political decision-making.	• To supervise that the assessment team's practices include an intersectional perspective in all the different stages of the process. • To supply disaggregated data and their possible intersections to the assessment team, as well as all the information needed for an intersectional approach.
Assessment team	• To revise assessment practices and incorporate an intersectional perspective in assessment decisions at the different stages of the process. • To analyse the implications of the assessed policy in intersectional terms and produce materials and recommendations that make it possible to incorporate the assessment results into political decision-making.	• To raise the assessment team's awareness of the importance of assessing with an intersectional perspective to improve the quality of the assessment and its implications. • To understand the limitations affecting the commissioned assessment and to adapt the incorporation of the intersectional perspective to the needs expressed by the commissioning unit.

Source: adapted from *Guia pràctica 18* (De Quintana Medina, 2021).

How to assess?

An intersectional approach does not constitute a specific assessment methodology, but a perspective that should orient the whole assessment process, from the definition of the assignment down to the analysis and dissemination of the results. Adopting such a perspective may require the use of different methodological approaches depending on the intended depth. More descriptive assessments can be carried out by using quantitative techniques, provided that sufficiently disaggregated data are available and can be cross-referenced. By contrast, assessments with a more structural orientation usually require more sophisticated methods of relational and causal analysis—such as multiple regression, mixed methods, or discourse and content analysis techniques. Finally, assessments oriented towards transformation usually incorporate—besides all the aforementioned techniques—participative methodologies that make it possible to integrate the voices of the involved social groups and enhance the transformative power of the assessment results.

To carry out an intersectional assessment requires studying the impact that our actions have had on all the other inequality axes. For example: has a campaign for HIV prevention in men who have sex with men given rise to biases related to class, origin, or disability?

Which profiles of men have felt included, and which have not? Why are there profiles that have not felt addressed? Which elements of the campaign (graphic representation, dissemination strategies, discourse, implementation...) may have given rise to such exclusion? What can we do in our next action so that these exclusions do not happen again? (Coll Planas, Solà Morales and Missé, 2019).

To assess from an intersectional perspective means analysing how different inequality axes (such as gender, origin, social class, age, disability, etc.), taken as structural phenomena, criss-cross in the policy under scrutiny and what differential impacts they have **on** people and social groups, with the aim of guaranteeing more just and effective policies and interventions. In addition to this, it is fundamental to critically examine how our own social position (in relation to gender, class, origin, among others), as well as our values and prior knowledge, may influence the way we perceive and interpret the situations of inequality that are being assessed. It is also necessary to consider how all these conditions affect our degree of acknowledgement of the voices and experiences of the involved social groups. Altogether, it requires incorporating reflexivity into the team as a cross-cutting practice throughout the assessment process (see Table 3).

Intersectionality does not constitute a specific evaluation methodology, but rather a perspective that must guide the entire evaluation process, from the formulation of the assignment to the analysis and dissemination of the results.

Questions to stimulate reflexivity

- What knowledge, values, and experiences can you contribute to this field of public policy analysis?
- What is your own experience with public policy and public policy analysis?
- In which spheres of public policy have you worked?
- How do all these personal experiences relate to the social and structural positions and processes (for example, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender expression, and age; patriarchy, racism, heterosexism, etc.) in this sphere of public policy?
- What are your personal values, experiences, interests, beliefs and political commitments?

Source: adapted from Hankivsky et al., 2014



Additional resources

Rebolledo, Jame i Galaz V., Catherine. 2023. *Interseccionalidad: Aspectos conceptuales y recomendaciones para las políticas públicas*. Prodemu. Available at: <https://www.prodemu.cl/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Interseccionalidad12.pdf>

4. How to assess from an intersectional perspective?

Evaluating from an intersectional perspective involves systematically integrating the analysis of inequalities and their interactions across all stages of the evaluation process—from defining the scope of the assignment to decision-making—in order to ensure more robust diagnoses and equity-oriented recommendations. This approach requires a critical review of objectives, methodologies, data, and analytical criteria, guided by principles of social justice, reflexivity, and structural transformation.

After establishing what is understood by intersectionality, why it is necessary to incorporate an intersectional perspective into assessment processes, and what its application involves, this section offers practical guidelines to integrate intersectionality into each of the stages of the assessment process. This process includes, first, **the planning stage**, in which the assessment assignment and the programme's evaluability are reviewed, the assessment team is formed, and the goals of the assessment are established. Secondly, **the stage of methodological design** is where the assessment questions, the methodology for data collection and analysis (indicators, methods, informants, etc.), and the foreseen actions are established. Next, the execution stage is when data are gathered and analysed, results are interpreted, and conclusions and recommendations are drafted. Finally, **the decision-making stage** involves the dissemination of the results and the integration of the produced evidence into the decision-making processes concerning the assessed policy or programme. The incorporation of an intersectional perspective into assessment processes cannot be an exceptional or accessory fact, but must be a **systematic, cross-cutting process** guaranteeing that, at each stage, structural inequalities and their configuring intersections are identified and analysed.

Stage 0. Defining the goals and the purpose of using an assessment with an intersectional perspective

Producing a clear definition of the goals and purpose of the assessment is a fundamental step to guarantee its usefulness and transformative orientation. When an intersectional perspective is adopted, **inequalities within the same group and between groups, as well as the way the assessed policy differently affects individuals depending on their social positions**, must all be examined. It must also be noted that, although the assessment goals are initially defined by the commissioning unit, the assessment team has a certain room to partially reorient or re-formulate them so that they substantially incorporate the intersectional perspective.

The goals of an assessment from an intersectional perspective must be:

- To focus on **identifying and analysing structural inequalities** and their interactions, especially those that might be rendered invisible by more homogenising approaches.

- To **examine the differentiated impacts** that the assessed policy has as a function of inequality axes such as gender, origin, administrative situation, disability, age, and sexual orientation, among others.
- To appraise the **transformative capacity of the assessed policy**, i.e., whether it contributes to reversing structural inequalities, reproduces them, or produces new ones.

With respect to the **purpose of its use**, assessing from an intersectional perspective may fulfil different functions that should be explicitly stated from the beginning of the process. Thus, it may contribute to **improving public policies** by identifying shortcomings and proposing adjustments to increase their equity and effectiveness for all social groups. It may also play an important role in the programme **accountability before the citizenry**, especially before the involved social groups, by promoting transparency in its results and in the use of public resources. Lastly, it may **generate institutional learning** by producing knowledge that can be transferred to other spheres and contributing to an organisational culture which is more sensitive to diversity and inequality; and it may support processes of collective deliberation by providing evidence that enriches informed and participative decision-making processes.

Finally, it is necessary to ensure that the stated goals are **consistent with the values and principles of the intersectional approach**, and that they are properly aligned with the existing political and normative commitments regarding equality and human rights.

The assessment mandate

To make sure that a public policy evaluation from an intersectional perspective is rigorous and useful for decision-making, the assessment mandate is crucial. It must be noted that, as seen in the previous chapter, the assessment with an intersectional perspective can be applied to all kinds of public policies, whether they have been designed adopting an intersectional perspective or not.

Next, we enumerate the main aspects to be taken into consideration:

- The assignment must explicitly state that the assessment will incorporate an intersectional perspective, understood as the analysis of how different inequality axes—such as gender, origin, social class, or disability—intersect with and configure each other, and that it will take into consideration their systemic and structural effects and the impact they have on the assessed public policy.
- It would be desirable for the methodology to incorporate assessment questions formulated in such a way that it is possible to analyse who is excluded from the assessed policy, for what reason, and with what consequences. It is advisable to include questions or analytical dimensions concerning aspects such as unequal access to services, institutional or cultural barriers, differentiated impacts, and the transformative capacity of the policy under scrutiny with respect to the existing inequality structures.

The incorporation of the intersectional perspective in the evaluation cannot be one-off or incidental, but must constitute a systematic and transversal process that ensures that, at each stage, structural inequalities and the intersections that shape them are identified and analyzed.

- Social justice and equity should be considered analytical dimensions, with the aim of evaluating whether the policy being assessed contributes to reducing or perpetuating structural inequalities.
- It must include mechanisms to guarantee the accountability of results and their dissemination to the involved actors, especially those groups on which the assessed policy has an impact.
- It must guarantee that the recommendations that derive from the assessment results include measures to reverse the perceived inequalities, as well as actions that benefit the affected communities.

The assessment mandate may also make explicit other elements that would be equally desirable:

- The mandate should include criteria to evaluate the assessment team's competencies in matters of intersectionality (training, experience, diverse composition), as has been stated before.
- It should be explicit that, as far as possible, the final report must include disaggregated, cross-referenced data corresponding to the multiple inequality axes relevant for the assessment at hand (not only sex/gender, but also origin, socioeconomic situation, disability, age, etc.).
- It should be explicitly stated that the final report must be written using inclusive language.

Stage 1. Planning the assessment

It is in this stage that the assessment team analyses the assignment and the associated demands and establishes the foundations for the assessment process. It is necessary to establish the goals and the methodology, and to identify the knowledge that is required regarding the policy or programme to be analysed. It is also necessary to evaluate the available resources (time, data, access to key actors, etc.) to make sure that an intersectional approach is viable.

Each of these tasks should incorporate a cross-cutting intersectional perspective. Next, we shall explain in detail how to incorporate such a perspective in every action included in this stage.

Revising the assessment mandate

Once we have been tasked with an assessment job, it is essential to critically analyse the purpose, whether the assignment adopts an intersectional perspective or not, and the initial formulation of the assessment questions, if these have previously been defined (see Table 3 on the assessment scenarios in the previous section). This revision should allow us to determine what kind of assessment approach the mandate proposes (see Table 2) and give us a chance to redefine it in intersectional terms. This revision does not involve defining the operational goals for the assessment, which will be established later on, but only ensuring that the initial approach is open and critical and does not render invisible, from the outset, the variety of social positions of the involved population.

Some guiding questions to carry out this initial revision could be:

- Do the questions consider the differentiated effects of the policy on different social groups?
- Are the structural effects of the policy taken into consideration?
- Does our analysis identify interrelated areas of inequality affecting the groups involved in the assessed public policy in differentiated ways?
- Does the assessment foresee the possibility of producing useful knowledge oriented towards the reduction of inequalities?

Whenever possible, when identifying a merely rhetorical or superficial incorporation of the intersectional perspective, it is advisable to open a space of dialogue with the commissioning institution, with the aim of revising the purpose of the assessment and ensuring that such a perspective is integrated in a substantial and consistent manner from the beginning of the assessment process.

Selecting the right assessment team

The selection of the assessment team is a strategic decision when it comes to ensuring the incorporation of an intersectional perspective in all assessment stages. Some questions that should be considered are:

Knowledge and competencies

It is important that the team has robust knowledge of intersectional, feminist, antiracist, and/or decolonial approaches applied to public policy, as well as of the different inequality axes involved in the policy or programme to be assessed. The team must be able to identify how this policy may reproduce or challenge structural power relations such as institutional racism, sexism or classism.

Team members

It is advisable to have an assessment team made up of individuals with diverse life trajectories, especially regarding the inequality axes involved in the analysis, as this will provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the structural dynamics to be assessed. However, especially in cases where the team members cannot reflect such diversity, it is necessary to foresee mechanisms for the participation of people from the affected social groups or from entities tending to these groups. This participation may take different forms and take place at different points along the assessment process. For more in-depth information on this aspect, see the *Guia Ivàlua* on the incorporation of participation in public policy evaluation (Cordoncillo, 2022).

Methodological skills

Command of different techniques: An intersectional approach often requires multi-method approaches that integrate quantitative, qualitative, and even mixed methods in order to grasp different experiences of domination and oppression.

Ability to have an impact and translate results

- **Ability to formulate public policy recommendations that are feasible to apply.**
- **Ability to communicate results to diverse publics** (institutions, citizens, affected people).

Although all these conditions are desirable, it is not always easy to possess all these capacities and resources. In these cases, it is advisable to try to make up for the missing features by incorporating expert knowledge from outside the assessment team at those stages of the process where it is pertinent, and to explicitly mention in the assessment report those conditions that, despite being desirable, could not be fulfilled and are still considered to be relevant to carrying out an assessment with an intersectional perspective.

Appraising evaluability in intersectional terms

Appraising the evaluability of a programme or policy is an essential preliminary step towards determining whether it is viable, useful and pertinent to carry out an assessment from an intersectional perspective. This kind of appraisal is not limited to analysing the availability of data or the definition of the programme's goals, but it also examines its institutional context, the existing political configuration, and the available resources.

To do so, different elements must be considered:

1. To revise the incorporation of intersectionality in policy design

- Is intersectionality mentioned in the design of the public policy?
- What is the approach to intersectionality (rhetorical, descriptive, structural, or transformative)?
- What inequality axes are mentioned? Are their interactions addressed?
- Are the goals of the programme or policy formulated in such a way that they make it possible to analyse their differentiated impacts?
- Does the theory of change consider the way in which structural inequalities affect the development of the intervention and its results?

2. Availability of relevant information that can be disaggregated

- Are disaggregated data by axes such as gender, origin, administrative situation, disability, age, and other pertinent categories available?
- Are these data accessible, reliable, and comparable?
- Are any data missing that should be made up for by using other sources or methodologies?

3. Access to the involved actors and affected social groups

- Is it possible to have access to the programme users/beneficiaries and other relevant groups in order to include diversified voices in the assessment process?
- Are the conditions in place to guarantee the secure and meaningful participation of the most socially vulnerable groups?

4. Political and institutional willingness to incorporate an intersectional look

- Is there an explicit institutional and political commitment to the principles of equity and intersectionality?
- Are the agents in charge of designing and implementing the policy willing to incorporate the learning and recommendations resulting from the assessment?
- Have they stated explicitly their willingness to take into consideration the assessment results and recommendations in decision-making?

5. Available resources

- Does the timing of the assessment make it possible to apply the appropriate methodologies in order to grasp the intersections between inequalities?
- Does the assessment team have the time, training, and support needed to apply an intersectional approach?

The answers to all these questions allow us to identify barriers to the incorporation of an intersectional perspective in the assessment process, as well as to define possible adaptations to ensure its feasibility and relevance. The fact that a policy is evaluable from an intersectional perspective does not necessarily imply that it has been designed with such sensitivity, but rather **that the minimum conditions for the assessment to consider its differentiated impact on different inequality axes are present**. Otherwise, it will be necessary to think about adaptations to the original design of the assessment, or about the adoption of preliminary actions such as improving the information systems, consulting with the affected groups or defining the assessment goals more precisely.

It must be noted that not all assessments fulfil the necessary conditions to fully incorporate the intersectional perspective, whether this is due to limited data availability, to the characteristics of the assignment, or to other conditioning features associated with the context. In these cases, it is important that the assessment report explicitly states so, pointing out the implications that it may have in the interpretation of results. It may also include a recommendation to carry out a future assessment that makes it possible to achieve a deeper understanding of the results from an intersectional perspective.

Stage 2. Defining the assessment's methodological design

Selecting the inequality axes at play

One of the first steps in the execution of an assessment from an intersectional perspective is to identify the inequality axes at play, depending on the specific context of the programme or policy under scrutiny. This identification may vary depending on whether we are dealing with a universal policy (such as a programme to reduce waiting lists in the healthcare system or an educational reform), or a more focused intervention (for example, one addressed to the LGBTI+ community or a minimum income programme), where one of the axes is already explicit. In both cases, the objective is to

analyse the way in which the interaction between this axis and other dimensions (such as origin, age, or socioeconomic level) may give rise to differentiated impacts. However, this task cannot be grounded only in pre-established categories, but it must start with a contextual and empirical analysis that takes into account both the structural dimensions of inequality and the experiences and narratives of the involved social groups.

To select the inequality axes at play, it is recommended to:

- **Revise the existing literature** in order to identify possible relevant axes for that context.
- **Hold exploratory interviews** with key informants.
- Carry out a **preliminary analysis of the institutional and social contexts**, keeping in mind the objectives of the policy in question regarding the existing conflicts or tensions, the applicable normative framework, and the recommendations of expert or community groups.
- **Revise the available data** to detect inequality patterns which are already visible or critical gaps in information.
- **Consult the involved social and community groups** on what the most significant dimensions of inequality are and what experiences are often invisibilised.
- **Avoid simplifying or essentialist approaches** based on a limited number of variables that do not grasp interactions or intersections between categories.

The correct identification of inequality axes allows us to better orient subsequent analyses, to guarantee a proper reading of inequalities, and to establish priorities when it comes to formulating recommendations. It also prevents frequent mistakes, such as invisibilising inequalities within the social groups usually labelled as homogeneous (for example, treating “women” as a unified category without taking into account their differences in origin, class or age). However, we should keep in mind that, in the execution stage, new axes may emerge which were not contemplated in the design stage, and these should also be incorporated into the analysis.

Drafting assessment questions with an intersectional perspective

For the questions to guide the intersectional analysis, they must:

- Reveal the differentiated experiences of the population depending on several social axes (gender, origin, administrative situation, disability, age, etc.).
- Consider the **specific barriers to access, use or benefit** that may affect certain groups.
- Explore whether the policy in question **transforms, maintains, or ignores structural power relations**.

Examples:

- What are the inequality axes at play? (according to the aforementioned analysis carried out in the design stage)
- What social groups have been excluded from the policy? What barriers have been found?
- How do the policy effects vary as a function of the intersection of gender and origin?
- Does the policy reduce or reinforce existing inequalities, or does it create new ones?

Combining quantitative and qualitative techniques

An intersectional approach **demand a plural and complementary methodological approach**. Whereas quantitative data allow us to identify patterns and trends, qualitative techniques are essential to understanding the meanings, experiences and mechanisms operating behind those patterns.

It is particularly important that:

- **Quantitative data are disaggregated** by different inequality axes and make it possible to cross-reference variables, and explore their interactions.
- **Qualitative data include the diversity, experiences and perspectives** of underrepresented and often silenced groups.

Data disaggregation and complementarity

As for the collection of information, it is important:

- To collect and analyse data in a systematic way, disaggregated by multiple inequality axes (gender, origin, social class, disability, age, administrative situation, etc.).
- To complement quantitative information with situated experiential narratives, using qualitative methodologies that allow us to grasp dimensions that remain invisible in numerical data.
- To identify structural gaps of information, especially concerning social groups that are traditionally invisibilised, and to document such voids critically as part of both the assessment and the recommendations for improvement.

Selecting information sources from an intersectional perspective

The sources of information used in an intersectional assessment must make it possible **to analyse the diversity and complexity of social inequalities**. They may be primary (if they are collected *ad hoc*) or secondary (if we rely on data coming from surveys or records), and they may be of a qualitative or quantitative nature.

It is necessary to critically review the available sources of information and to identify any biases or shortcomings.

Key aspects:

- To prioritise sources that can be disaggregated and to cross-reference data for multiple axes (sex, gender, origin, age, administrative situation).
- To identify other invisibilised or underrepresented sources (for example, data gathered by community groups and organisations).
- To complement official sources with reports by social entities, previous research, grey literature, or documentation produced by the affected groups.

It is also necessary **to document any missing data and explicitly specify the limitations that their absence entails**, as well as suggesting ways to make up for them (collection by the assessment team, qualitative inference, contextual data).

Indicators sensitive to intersectionality

An indicator that is sensitive to intersectionality is a quantitative or qualitative measure that allows us to identify or reveal the social inequalities produced by the overlapping of several inequality axes—such as gender, ethnic or national origin, social class, disability, age, sexual orientation, or administrative situation—in a particular context or in connection with a specific public policy. To construct one, we can follow these steps:

1. To identify the relevant inequality axes for the policy under scrutiny through theoretical revision and/or exploratory analysis of available data.
2. To have disaggregated data that can be cross-referenced for at least two inequality axes simultaneously.
3. To identify the different relevant sub-groups based on theory or statistical analysis.
4. To analyse the differences for each sub-group, establishing a reference group in case we wish to analyse possible gaps.
5. To validate our indicator by submitting it to expert judgement, pilot testing, or triangulation mechanisms.

However, when we turn to following all these steps, the construction of indicators that are sensitive to intersectionality may present different options depending on the data available and the assessment context. In general terms, we can distinguish two main options:

1. To use existing indicators and cross-reference the available data, which makes it possible to render visible inequalities that often remain hidden when only a single inequality axis is analysed.
2. To explore other approaches, inspired by the logic of non-androcentric indicators, i.e. indicators that question the prevailing perspective and incorporate experiences, practices, and dimensions that are usually excluded from conventional statistics.

The latter option is based on the acknowledgement that many traditional indicators are not neutral, but they reflect the hegemonic perspective. Non-androcentric indicators seek precisely to broaden this perspective and to capture aspects that are rendered invisible by individual metrics. For example:

- As far as gender is concerned, many economic indicators use the household as their unit of analysis and are based on the assumption of an equitable distribution of resources, which obscures internal inequalities and the imbalances in access to and control over income. A non-androcentric indicator,³ on the contrary, would analyse how time and economic resources are distributed within the household, or the total (productive and reproductive) workload by gender.
- Regarding functional diversity, many social indicators still focus on people's supposed "limitations", such as their capacity to perform certain activities or work tasks, instead of analysing the social, material, and attitudinal barriers that hinder the exercise of their rights. Such an approach reinforces a pathologising and ableist view of disability. An alternative approach, aligned with the social model, would place the emphasis on environmental conditions and on the supports available; for example, by measuring the degree of effective accessibility of public services, education and training, or employment, as well as the level of autonomy and self-determination that people are able to exercise thanks to reasonable adjustments and personalised support.

3. For more information about non-androcentric indicators, see De Quintana Medina, Júlia (2021), *Guia pràctica 18. La perspectiva de gènere en l'avaluació de polítiques públiques*, Ivàlua, pp. 62-63.

- Regarding origin and ethnicity, many statistical sources exclude people in irregular administrative situations or with difficulties to register on the municipal census. This results in the systematic under-representation of people in such situations, many of whom are racialised individuals. To render them visible, it would be necessary to combine quantitative and qualitative sources in order to capture their effective access to rights and services, as well as to gather their perceptions of discrimination

and sense of belonging to the community as a measure of their actual degree of inclusion.

Therefore, this second option is not limited to cross-referencing existing data but rather invites a review of the assumptions underpinning the indicators and the creation of new ones that reflect dimensions that have been rendered invisible. It is a fundamental strategy for grasping the complexity of intersectional inequalities and understanding how they are reproduced in public policies.

Gender pay gap disaggregated by nationality

The gender pay gap has become one of the classic indicators to measure inequality in the sphere of work. In its simplest version, it is calculated by using the following formula:

$$\frac{(\text{men's average gross annual salary} - \text{woman's average gross annual salary})}{\text{men's average gross annual salary}} \times 100$$

According to data from the Wage Structure Survey, the gender pay gap in Catalonia has narrowed over the past two decades: it has fallen from 32.1% in 2004 to 16.7% in 2023 (in terms of gross annual salary). However, this indicator varies according to the population group considered. For example, among the foreign population, the gender pay gap stood at 19.8% in 2004 and 10.8% in 2023. In contrast, among the Spanish population, the gender pay gap was 33.04% in 2004 and 18.2% in 2023. From these differences, we can draw several observations:

- The gender pay gap among the foreign population is smaller than among the Spanish population, probably due to lower wage dispersion within the former group.
- The percentage reduction in the gap has been similar in both groups: around 45% over the period 2004–2023.

However, we be aware of certain limitations that affect the construction and interpretation of these indicators:

- The Wage Structure Survey only includes salaried workers registered with Social Security and therefore excludes informal work, such as domestic and care work, which is often carried out by foreign women in precarious situations.
- Treating the “foreign population” category as homogeneous conceals important intra-categorical differences, such as the country of origin and the associated socioeconomic status.
- We do not have administrative register data on other inequality axes, such as administrative situation (regular/irregular), which may affect both access to the labour market and wage conditions.

What to do when data are missing?

One of the problems that must be addressed when designing an evaluation with an intersectional perspective is the lack of data; that is, the fact that certain data are not prioritised despite their importance for understanding the oppressions and discrimination that affect minoritised social groups (D'Ignazo & Klein, 2020).

This lack of data can be due to different reasons:

- **Lack of registry data**, either because of a lack of political willingness to collect them, or due to the difficulty to access certain sorts of populations. An example of this could be the amount of population in an irregular administrative situation.

- **The way data are registered;** for example, sex is registered in a binary form, which makes it impossible to know the percentage of intersexual population.
- **Legal restrictions** that determine the existence of sensitive data requiring special protection. For example, article 9 of the General Data Protection Regulation restricts the collection of information relating to a person's ethnic or racial origin or sexual orientation unless there is free, explicit and informed consent.

In view of this situation, it is necessary to develop other strategies, such as drawing on secondary data from previous studies; collecting ad hoc data by means of a survey to gauge knowledge, attitudes and practices; qualitative inference; or the

construction of a **proxy indicator** which, although it does not directly measure the phenomenon of interest, can function as a reasonable substitute when primary data are not available to capture a given axis of inequality. An example of the use of a proxy indicator would be the creation of a variable on ethnicity constructed on the basis of the selection of a set of countries of birth and male and female names that make it possible to infer, in an approximate way, a racialised position in a given local context.

However, **if the administration genuinely wishes to move forward in promoting public policies with an intersectional perspective, it must develop new data collection strategies** that reconcile respect for the right to privacy with greater visibility of the various axes of inequality.

Sexual orientation, trans and intersex identities in the Population Censuses

In 2021, England and Wales pioneered the incorporation into the Population Census of a voluntary question about sexual orientation that made it possible to obtain more fine-grained knowledge about the LGBT+ community, with 3.2% of the population over the age of 15 identifying as such. In 2022, Scotland added a voluntary question on transgender identity to the Population Census, following a consultation process with organisations and groups, which made it possible to estimate that 0.44% of the population over the age of 15 identify in this way. In 2023, New Zealand also incorporated a voluntary question to identify the intersex population, which showed that 0.4% of the population over the age of 15 considered that they had been born with variations of sex characteristics.

Intersectional sampling

The selection of informants is one of the key methodological decisions in any assessment process. When working with an intersectional perspective, this selection cannot be limited to ensuring a sample that is representative in terms of classic axes such as sex or age, but must instead be geared towards capturing the diversity of experiences and inequalities that emerge from the interaction between different social positions.

Goals of intersectional sampling

Intersectional sampling seeks:

- To render visible the internal diversity inside apparently homogeneous social categories. For example, migrant women with university education working in the domestic sector vs. migrant women without formal education doing the same work.
- To identify positions that may be particularly vulnerable owing to their invisibilisation. For example, trans people with disabilities who access primary care services vs. cis people with disabilities, who are usually more explicitly considered in care protocols.

- To capture differentiated experiences that make it possible to understand the specific impacts of a policy on groups located at the intersection of various axes of inequality. For example, young care leavers of migrant origin without a family network vs. care leavers of local origin with community or family support. It is necessary to plan for a **balanced representation** of the different profiles and territorial contexts, avoiding unjustified extrapolations or generalisations from specific groups.

Recommended sampling strategies

An appropriate sampling design must make it possible to grasp this intra-categorical heterogeneity, through strategies such as stratified sampling, theoretical/purposive sampling or, especially in mixed-methods designs, the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), used to collect intersectional experiences in real time.

Additionally, the use of qualitative techniques such as snowball sampling can make it easier to include social groups which are often invisibilized.

a) Mixed sampling (probabilistic + purposive)

- **Stratified probabilistic sampling:** where the different samples are drawn from the combination of different strata (population groups constructed by combining different variables corresponding to the axes of inequality) in order to be able to detect interactions.
- **Purposive or theoretical sampling:** particularly suitable for accessing small but socially significant groups. The selection of participants is carried out in an iterative manner, with the aim of achieving theoretical saturation, while capturing the variability required to analyse the intersections between different axes of inequality.

b) Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling is effective for accessing closed or less visible communities (people in an irregular administrative situation, LGBTI+ people located at the intersection of other axes of inequality) when no sampling frames are available.

Key criteria to be considered

- **Contextualization:** the selected profiles must make sense in relation to the social and political context in which the public policy under analysis operates.
- **Relational, and not just individual, saturation:** it must be ensured that not only diverse profiles are covered, but also different social situations (for example, mothers with caregiving responsibilities in an irregular administrative situation vs. mothers with extensive family support).
- **Ethical and safe participation:** especially when dealing with groups facing multiple vulnerabilities, it is necessary to design protocols for approach, consent and feedback that avoid re-victimisation.
- **Reflexivity in the selection process:** it is necessary to make explicit why certain profiles have been selected, which positions have been left out and for what reasons (access, resources, time, etc.), together with proposals for future improvement.

Selection of informants

In an evaluation with an intersectional perspective, it is particularly important to include the voices and experiences of the individuals and organisations that are directly or indirectly affected by the policy, as well as those of experts and of the units working with the groups directly affected, taking into account their situated position in relation to the inequality axes. The participation of these actors is crucial, not only for gathering relevant qualitative information that complements the analysis and makes it possible to contrast the issues that have emerged in exploratory interviews, but also for ensuring that the evaluation reflects their needs, demands and forms of knowledge, which are often excluded.

Involving individuals, organisations and units with direct experience of the inequalities to be addressed helps to give visibility to problems that have traditionally been analysed without the protagonism or the voice of the affected people. In many cases, there has been a tendency to study social

inequalities from an external perspective, assuming that others—often men, white people, or those not affected by multiple axes of inequality—can speak on their behalf. Thus, incorporating their participation as informants not only makes it possible to contrast diverse, situated perspectives, but also increases the relevance of the evaluation's findings and lessons learned, and helps to identify information gaps and potential obstacles that often remain invisible or are overlooked.

Planning the fieldwork in advance from this perspective entails **ensuring the inclusion of diverse voices and, in particular, of social groups that are often excluded from the assessment.**

Practical recommendations:

- **Diversify informant profiles** according to the axes that are relevant to the policy under scrutiny.
- **Ensure accessibility:** adapt language, formats, schedules, spaces and channels to facilitate participation.
- **Create bonds with community or grassroots organisations** to facilitate the identification of informants and the conduct of fieldwork with legitimacy.
- **Minimise risks and build trust**, especially when working with populations in situations of vulnerability: provide clear information, guarantee anonymity, offer compensation where appropriate, and obtain informed consent.
- Set up safe spaces for **safe spaces for genuine, deliberative participation**, including cultural mediation, care, emotional support or translation where necessary.
- Acknowledge the **situated expertise** of participants and incorporate it as valuable knowledge for the assessment.
- Ensure **plural and equitable representation** within participatory spaces, avoiding the concentration of voice in hegemonic profiles within each group.

Stage 3. Conducting the assessment

Analysing data with an intersectional perspective

An intersectional perspective applied to data analysis can be developed using quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods approaches. With regard to quantitative analysis, a distinction can be drawn between additive and multiplicative approaches. (Rouhani, 2014). **Additive approaches** assume that demographic variables have cumulative effects, on the basis that the different categories are mutually exclusive. For example, if one wishes to analyse the effects of different factors (gender, age and ethnicity) on a given index of social vulnerability, an equation such as the following can be constructed:

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + e$$

On the other hand, **multiplicative approaches** hold that it is necessary to evaluate different models in order to measure not only the effect of the different variables separately, but also the various interactions between them, as expressed in the following equation:

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4(x_1x_2) + b_5(x_2x_3) + b_6(x_1x_3) + b_7(x_1x_2x_3) + e$$

In contrast to the additive approach, the multiplicative approach assumes that the effects of the variables do not operate independently and that it is necessary to assess their possible interactions. For example, instead of analysing separately the effects of gender, age or ethnic origin on an indicator of social vulnerability, the approach assesses whether the interactions between these factors—such as gender and origin, gender and age and origin, or the combination of all three—have a significant effect on the indicator under analysis. It is for this reason that this model is considered more appropriate for the analysis of quantitative data with an intersectional perspective, although its interpretation may be more complex.⁴

4. In some cases, it may be justifiable to raise the p-value threshold from 0.05 to 0.10 in order to avoid discarding interactions that may be relevant, especially in exploratory studies.

Examples of quantitative methods of analysis that are useful for applying an intersectional perspective:

Analysis of contingency tables: cross-tabulating two or more categorical variables corresponding to the different axes of inequality.

Strengths: easy to interpret, it makes it possible to render inequalities visible.

Limitations: it only allows the analysis of pairwise interactions (chi-square tests).

Multiple linear regression incorporating the different interactions between the various axes.

Strengths: it makes it possible to test hypotheses about intersectional effects.

Limitations: the interpretation becomes more complex with higher-order interactions; it requires large samples in order to avoid problems of statistical power or multicollinearity.

Multilevel analysis: analysing the effect of the different intersections at both the individual and contextual levels.

Strengths: it makes it possible to model interactions at different levels (individual, school, municipality).

Limitations: problems of overfitting and collinearity may arise.

Log-linear analysis: to study the interaction between three or more categorical variables.

Strengths: it allows the analysis of interactions between categorical variables.

Limitations: interpretation becomes more complex when more than three variables interact.

Cluster analysis: it makes it possible to identify profiles or typologies of individuals based on combinations of social characteristics.

Strengths: it makes it possible to uncover hidden intersections: it can be useful for designing more finely tailored policies.

Limitations: the results depend heavily on the data; they do not allow causal attribution.

Segmentation analysis: it makes it possible to divide the population into subgroups sharing common social characteristics in order to analyse how different combinations of inequality axes affect the outcomes of a policy.

Strengths: it renders visible intersectional inequalities that are not detectable in aggregate analyses; it is useful for identifying under-represented groups or those experiencing differential impacts.

Limitations: it can lead to excessive fragmentation; the resulting segments may be difficult to interpret.

Examples of qualitative methods of analysis that are useful for applying an intersectional perspective:

Thematic analysis: makes it possible to identify and categorise emerging themes (in an interview, focus group, etc.), taking into account the different inequality axes and their intersections.

Strengths: economy of resources and adaptability to different contexts and situations.

Limitations: its analytical power decreases as the level of abstraction increases; it may be more useful for descriptive approaches than for structural ones.

Content analysis: a systematic method for coding and interpreting textual contents with the aim of identifying patterns, frequencies or relationships between categories.

Strengths: great versatility of use, making it possible to achieve different levels of depth and to be applied to various textual formats (interviews, documents, social media).

Limitations: the fragmentation into codes may hinder the understanding of intersectional inequalities, especially if no subsequent triangulation is carried out.

Narrative analysis: it examines how people construct accounts of their experiences, with an emphasis on the temporal dimension, the context and the social identities.

Strengths: it makes it possible to grasp the complexity of life trajectories and to render visible the intersections between personal biography and social structure.

Limitations: it can render the structural dimension invisible if attention focuses solely on the individual narrative without taking account of the social context.

Discourse analysis: it explores how power relations, identity and exclusion are constructed and reproduced through language.

Strengths: a critical approach that makes it possible to analyse social structures in language; useful for rendering visible the naturalisation of intersectional inequalities.

Limitations: its high methodological complexity can lead to excessively abstract or decontextualised interpretations if it is not grounded in solid methodological competence.

Relief maps: a visual and methodological tool for representing, in an intersectional way, how inequalities are perceived by individuals along three dimensions: social, territorial and emotional.

Strengths: multidimensional approach, sensitive to situated experiences.

Limitations: it depends on the expressive capacity of the participants; the interpretation of the results can be difficult when multiple axes are involved.

Likewise, the combination of methods should aim at **triangulation and complementarity**, rather than mere confirmation. When the available sources do not allow disaggregation by all the axes at play, it may be necessary to collect specific data or to combine different instruments.

- **Triangulation**
- **Cross-checking different data sources** (administrative, survey-based and qualitative) in order to generate a richer and more nuanced understanding of the functioning and/or effects of the policy.
- **Combining different methods** (quantitative and qualitative) in order to better reflect situated experiences and the interactions between axes.
- **Involving different researchers with diverse areas of expertise** (for example, in relation to the different axes at stake) in order to reduce potential biases.
- **Critical analysis and interpretation**
- It is necessary to interrogate the **unequal distribution of the benefits and costs** of the policy: *Who benefits and who is excluded? Why? Can we identify barriers to access to resources and services? Which intersections shape these effects?*
- To analyse **not only aggregate or average outcomes**, but also the effects that are differentially distributed according to the social position of the groups involved.
- To situate the results within the broader framework of **structural power relations**, avoiding a fragmented or purely statistical reading.

Classifying the degree of depth in the application of an intersectional perspective

As explained in Chapter 4, there are different degrees of depth and ambition in the application of an intersectional perspective in an assessment. At this stage of the process, once the axes of inequality at play have been identified, it is necessary to determine which degree of intersectional evaluation is being applied: **descriptive, structural or transformative**. It should be borne in mind, however, that these levels follow a certain progression: to carry out a structural assessment, it is necessary first to have conducted a descriptive analysis, and to undertake a transformative evaluation, it is necessary to have carried out a structural analysis previously.

Annex 1 includes a set of questions that do not constitute an exhaustive list, but rather a guiding framework to help shape and deepen the analysis according to the context, objectives and resources available. Inspired by the descriptive and transformative questions compiled in Hankivsky et al. (2014) and by Bacchi's (2009) *What's the Problem?* model, these questions make it possible progressively to address each of the three levels of assessment, while broadening and transforming the way in which public policy problems and institutional responses to them are understood.

The application of these questions can be adapted to different realities and needs. Each assessment team can decide to what extent it will use them all or not: some may work through all the questions systematically, while others may focus on those that are most relevant in light of the nature of the policy, its trajectory or the stage reached in the assessment.

There are different degrees of depth and ambition in the application of the intersectional perspective in an evaluation.

This classification not only serves to label the assessment, but also helps to adjust expectations, methods, and strategies for dissemination and policy influence, according to the degree of commitment to the transformation of structural inequalities.

1. Descriptive intersectional assessment

- **Objective:** to identify and describe the differential impacts of a policy on various social groups, according to the inequality axes and their intersections.
- **Methodology:** primary use of quantitative and qualitative techniques, taking into account the intersection of different axes (for example, gender and origin).
- **Limitations:** the structural causes of inequalities are not always analysed; the political and institutional frameworks are often not called into question.
- **Usefulness:** this is the minimum level of intersectional incorporation and may be a necessary step in contexts with limited data or resources.

2. Structural intersectional assessment

- **Objective:** to analyse how policies interact with systems of oppression (racism, patriarchy, classism, ableism, etc.) and how these interactions shape structural inequalities.
- **Methodology:** use of complex analytical frameworks, analysis of structural causality, and the cross-examination of data, narratives, and institutional dimensions.
- **Requires:** more time, technical expertise, and institutional willingness to question the systemic effects of policy.
- **Added value:** it enables an understanding of the institutional reproduction of inequalities and the development of recommendations that are better tailored to the context.

3. Transformative intersectional assessment

- **Objective:** to contribute actively to social justice by unsettling the mechanisms that reproduce inequalities and by promoting institutional, cultural, and political change.
- **Methodology:** participatory approaches, co-design with affected groups, political interpretation of the results, and strategies to ensure effective incidence.
- **Involves:** an ethical and political commitment from both the assessment team and the unit commissioning the assessment.
- **Impact:** it makes it possible to transform, not only the specific policy being evaluated, but also institutional practices of public planning and assessment.
- **Which policy levers are available (for example, research/data, political allies, laws/regulations/conventions, resources)?** This classification can help to reflect critically on the depth and coherence of the evaluation, as well as to identify the institutional, political, and epistemological conditions required to move towards more transformative forms of evaluation.

Analysis of resistances

The **analysis of resistances** is a useful analytical dimension in evaluations, as it helps to understand the limitations involved in incorporating intersectionality into public policies: from resistances that may emerge towards the use of the concept of intersectionality—on the grounds that it might be perceived as undermining a specific area of intervention (gender, the LGBTI+ community, etc.)—to resistances to acknowledging that certain policies or practices may have a discriminatory or oppressive component. Indeed, whenever a public policy is implemented, resistances to its innovative and transformative elements inevitably emerge.

Although this document has a technical purpose, **the profoundly political dimension of intersectionality cannot be overlooked**, as it carries a transformative potential that may alter access to resources, but also challenge established social structures and hierarchies. Indeed, **political will** is an essential prerequisite for the effective incorporation of an intersectional perspective into public policies. Very often, it represents the first barrier to be overcome and must be present from the initial phases of design and implementation, not only at the moment of assessment. As has been the case with the gender perspective, this transformative potential may generate significant resistance among political decision-makers.

To analyse resistances, we can draw on the experience and accumulated knowledge regarding the resistances encountered in the transversal incorporation of the gender perspective into public policies. As Espinosa and Bustelo (2019) point out, drawing on contributions from Verloo (2018) and Alfama (2017), several types of resistances must be taken into consideration:

- **Formal institutional resistances:** these arise when legal or administrative structures do not allow for, or even hinder, the adoption of an intersectional perspective, such as the existence of compartmentalised procedures, regulations, or administrative structures, or the absence of a budget for intersectional actions.
- **Informal institutional resistances:** these are expressed through naturalised practices and cultural norms and are often rooted in professional inertia, lack of training, or limited understanding of the intersectional approach, as well as in relations of power and privilege. For example, opposition to broadening the target population to include certain groups, or reluctance to collaborate with organisations with which there has been no prior experience.
- **Individual resistances:** these are expressed through the personal reluctance of political decision-makers or technical staff to incorporate additional perspectives (intersectionality, the gender perspective, etc.), viewing them as ideological, overly complex, or insufficiently practical.

- **Explicit and implicit resistances:** these may show up openly through discourses claiming that the incorporation of intersectionality eventually fragments or obscures gender issues; or they may appear in more subtle ways, such as through a merely nominal or technocratic incorporation of intersectionality, without it having any practical consequences.

Once the differences have been identified, it is important to address them. A first step is **to properly manage expectations** regarding what applying intersectionality entails. According to Coll-Planas and Solà-Morales (2019), expectations may be overly modest (*"a complication that is not worth the effort"*) or overly ambitious (*"a new panacea"*). The key is to understand that, although the intersectional perspective is highly developed in theoretical terms, **there is still limited applied research and few concrete experiences in the field of public policies.**

How can these resistances be addressed?

- **With regard to institutional resistances,** it is necessary to provide support to technical teams during the planning and design of policies, through specific advisory services and training.
- **As regards informal and individual resistance,** the active participation of beneficiaries and rights holders from the initial stages can help to identify the effects in a more situated manner and in a way that is sensitive to intersecting inequalities.

Drawing up the assessment report from an intersectional perspective

The assessment report is the document that systematises the results obtained and formulates recommendations to contribute to the improvement of the policy or intervention analysed. The report must adopt inclusive and accessible communication that:

- Ensures that the **communication of the results** is carried out in **inclusive, clear and non-discriminatory language**, avoiding technical

jargon and the reproduction of symbolic discrimination.

- **Modulates the formats and channels of dissemination** (easy-to-read versions, visual supports, etc.) to ensure that the different participating groups can effectively access and take ownership of the results.
- **Adapts the recommendations and lessons learned to the different actors** involved in / affected by the policy, so that they can be adopted and incorporated into new policy formulations.

In order for this report to be coherent with an intersectional perspective, a series of steps may be followed that help to minimise potential biases:

- **Explain how the intersectional perspective has been incorporated into the assessment.**

The evaluation report must make explicit how the intersectional perspective has been incorporated throughout the entire process. This incorporation may be described on two complementary levels

First, concerning the methodology, it is necessary to indicate how the intersectional perspective has been taken into account in the definition of the assessment questions, the selection of indicators, the collection and analysis of data, and the identification of participants.

Second, from an analytical point of view, the report should show how the assessment has addressed inequalities in an intersectional manner, identifying the ways in which the intervention may affect different social groups in distinct ways, and analysing whether these actions contribute to reproducing, rendering invisible or transforming these inequalities (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

It should provide clear recommendations in terms of **intersectional equity**, understood as a normative principle that should guide public action towards the structural transformation of social inequalities, taking their interrelations into account, so as to ensure that all individuals and social groups can effectively access and enjoy rights, resources and opportunities on an equal basis.

- **Use inclusive language and representation**

Within the framework of an assessment conducted from an intersectional perspective, written and visual communication must actively contribute to inclusion and the recognition of diversity, avoiding the reinforcement of prejudices, stereotypes or unequal power relations. Texts, graphics, tables and selected images are not neutral; they may make diverse realities visible and promote equality or, alternatively, reproduce exclusion and invisibilisation.

- Provide a rigorous, responsible and well-reasoned presentation of the data in order to avoid simplistic or stigmatising interpretations of the data and graphs in relation to certain groups.
- Avoid reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices (both negative and positive) about people in situations of vulnerability.
- Select images and examples that reflect the complexity and plurality of society, without reinforcing imaginaries of domination and oppression.
- Use inclusive and non-discriminatory language (non-sexist, non-racist, non-ableist, non-LGBTI-phobic, etc.).
- Give visibility to the contributions of women and non-binary people by including the full given name of authors (De Quintana Medina, 2021).

Stage 4. Decision-making based on the assessment results

One of the key objectives of any assessment is to produce useful evidence to guide decision-making. When this is undertaken from an intersectional perspective, the challenge is to ensure that the results are not only technically rigorous but also contribute to the transformation of public policies in terms of social justice.

To ensure the effective and transformative use of the results of an evaluation conducted from an intersectional perspective, it is essential to work on two interrelated areas: the **dissemination of the results** and **political decision-making based on the recommendations**.

Dissemination of the results adopting an intersectional perspective

The way the assessment results are communicated can either reinforce or challenge inequalities. It is advisable to establish dissemination channels aimed at those audiences who are directly or indirectly concerned, based on the dimensions previously considered with regard to their intersections. Dissemination with an intersectional perspective should adhere to the following principles:

- **Diversification of formats and channels:** Adapt the results to different media (technical reports, infographics, audiovisual materials, community meetings, easy-to-read materials, etc.) and using a range of channels (digital, face-to-face, community-based) in order to ensure that all the groups involved can access and understand the information.
- **Translation into clear, inclusive and non-discriminatory language:** Avoid sophisticated technical language and ensure that the terminology used does not reproduce stigmatisation or discrimination. Include glossaries where necessary.
- **Feedback to affected groups:** Establish specific spaces for feedback and validation with the

individuals and groups involved, particularly those who have traditionally had no voice or influence in policy formulation and evaluation processes (feedback to informants and participation of informants / experts in the feedback process).

- **Transparency and accountability:** Make the evaluation results, their limitations and the decisions derived from them public, so that the traceability between the evidence generated and the institutional actions adopted can be followed.

Political decision-making from an intersectional perspective

The results of the evaluation must be translated into policy decisions that take into account the complexity and unequal distribution of the impacts of public policies. To this end, it is advisable to:

- **Analyse the results and agree upon the recommendations with all responsible units,** promoting interdepartmental working spaces that foster coordinated decision-making. Promoting such cross-cutting collaboration is key to ensuring that the internal organisation of the administration does not hinder the effective addressing of intersectional realities.
- **Co-design corrective or transformative measures** together with the actors concerned. This may involve reformulating programme actions, changing eligibility criteria, adapting services, or developing specific actions to address differentiated impacts identified in the assessment.
- **Ensure deliberative spaces** in which representatives of the groups affected, expert organisations and technical teams participate, in order to discuss the assessment results and recommendations, prioritise them and translate them into concrete action.
- **Maintain the intersectional approach throughout the public policy cycle,** ensuring that it informs the reformulation, implementation and design of future policies.

Table 8: Responsibilities of the commissioning unit and the assessment team in the different assessment stages

Stage	Commissioning unit	Assessment team
Assignment	- Defining an assessment mandate that incorporates an intersectional perspective. - Ensuring that this requirement is explicitly included in the assessment brief. - Including an analysis of how the policy affects the different inequality axes and how these interrelate. - Carrying out a preliminary analysis of the policy or programme to identify the inequality axes at play and to guide the intersectional approach of the assignment. - Requiring the assessment teams to have expert knowledge of intersectionality and of the dimensions of inequality at play.	
Planning	Raising awareness of the assessment team of the importance of incorporating an intersectional perspective as a means of improving the quality of the evaluation.	Identifying the conditions and limitations that may affect the incorporation of an intersectional perspective and propose strategies to minimise their effects.
Implementation	- Verifying that the practice of the assessment team effectively incorporates an intersectional perspective. - Ensuring that the information, monitoring and assessment systems contain disaggregated data and relevant indicators for analysing inequalities and their intersections, thereby facilitating the work of the assessment team.	- Review assessment practices and identifying potential biases in the decisions taken during all stages in the process. - Using and interpreting the available data to analyse the implications of the policy for the different inequality axes and their intersections, identifying patterns of inequity and differentiated effects. - Establishing a dialogue between the unit commissioning the evaluation and the assessment team to identify the limitations of the existing data and, if necessary, propose methodological adjustments or complementary data collection to ensure a robust intersectional analysis.

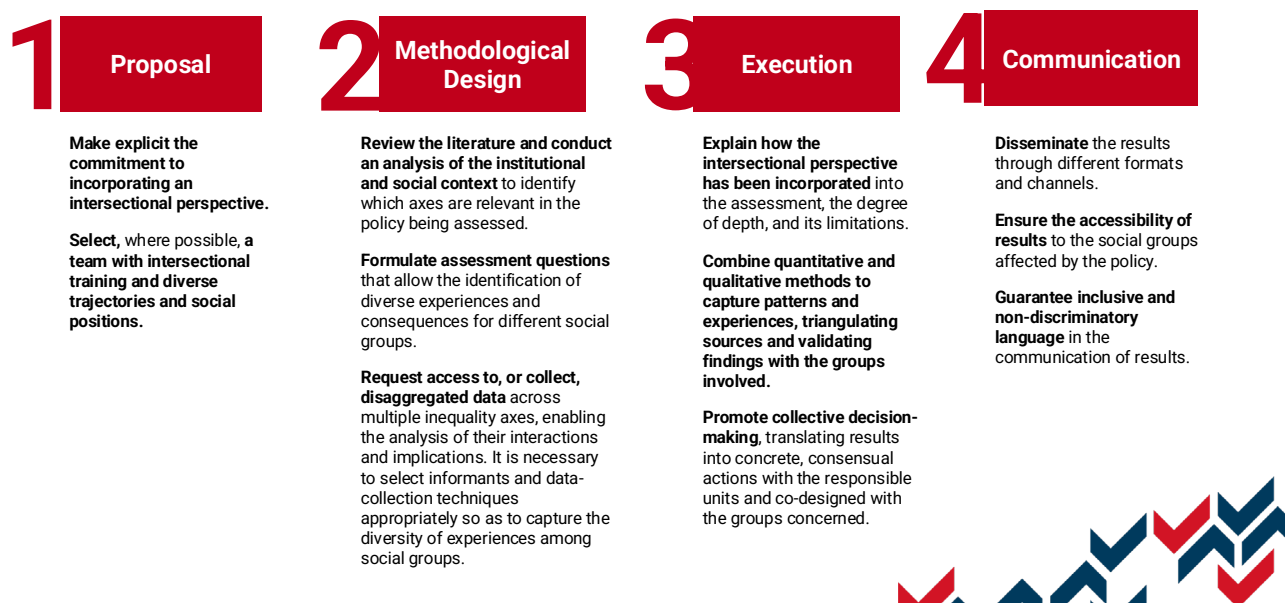


Stage	Commissioning unit	Assessment team
Implementation (cont.)	• Providing the evaluation team with the disaggregated data and the information necessary to carry out the analysis from an intersectional perspective. • Giving the evaluation team access to the documentation and the prior review of the policy to be assessed. • Fostering the involvement and participation of the groups affected by the policy or involved in its implementation.	• Analysing the implications of the policy from an intersectional perspective. • Formulating recommendations aimed at the different affected social groups. • Contrasting the preliminary results with affected groups, enabling deliberation, validation of indicators and discussion of the provisional findings. • Ensuring the use of inclusive, non-discriminatory and stereotype-free language.
Decision-making	• Communicating the results and conclusions of the assessment to the social organisations involved or affected. • Ensuring that the communication of the results is carried out in inclusive and non-discriminatory language. • Integrating the assessment results into public decision-making processes. • Establishing follow-up mechanisms to ensure that the recommendations from an intersectional perspective are translated into concrete changes in the policy or programme. This follow-up may be implemented through the creation of specific working spaces, such as interdepartmental committees, which ensure coordination among the different actors involved and facilitate the effective implementation of the proposed changes.	• Ensuring that the results are communicated in inclusive, non-discriminatory language. • Ensuring the publication of the assessment report. • Communicating the results and conclusions of the assessment to the social organisations involved or affected.

Source: compiled by the author.

Figure 1. Summary of the incorporation of the intersectional perspective across the evaluation phases

Checklist for Incorporating an Intersectional Perspective into Assessments



Additional resources

Biglia, Barbara; Bonet Martí, Jordi (coord.). 2022. *Introduint la perspectiva de gènere interseccional a les estadístiques. Guia teòricopràctica*. Institut Català de les Dones & Publicacions de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili. Disponible a: https://dones.gencat.cat/web/content/03_ambits/Observatori/07_estudis_metodologies/publicacions_eines15-1.pdf

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Eina en línia per estudiar les desigualtats socials des d'una perspectiva interseccional, emocional i espacial

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Annex 1. Questions to guide analytical reflection

1. Intersectional descriptive assessment:

- What are the inequality axes at play?
- Which intersections are relevant in light of the problem that motivates the intervention?
- Which social groups can be identified in relation to the intersection of different inequality axes, and what is their pertinence with respect to the policy under assessment?
- What differentiated impacts does the policy have on certain social groups according to the interplay of these axes?
- Do these impacts change over time? And across space?
- Where can the necessary information be found to address this question (for example, academic evidence, grey literature, and policy reports adopting an intersectional approach)?
- Which approaches can be employed to foster discussion of the problem among affected groups?
- What knowledge gaps or deficits in evidence exist regarding this problem in relation to population diversity?
- How has this representation of the 'problem' been reached? What was the process through which it was framed in this way? Who participated in it, and why has the 'problem' been defined in this manner? What types of evidence were used?
- How has the framing of the 'problem' changed over time (for example, historically) or across different places (for example, geographically)?
- How are social groups affected by this representation of the 'problem'? Which groups are regarded as more advantaged and which as less advantaged by this framing? Why and in what ways?
- How are different social groups interpreted based on the representation of the problem? What differences and similarities are considered to exist between the affected groups or within them?
- What political responses have been adopted in relation to the 'problem'? Who has responded to the 'problem' and how?
- What is the purpose of the current policies in relation to the problem?
- Do current policies focus on target groups? Which are they? Are these groups regarded as homogeneous or heterogeneous? Are they considered to be stigmatised by the current policy responses?

2. Structural intersectional assessment:

- What is the policy 'problem' under consideration?
- Which assumptions (for example, beliefs about what causes the problem and which population/s are most affected) underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
- Do current responses generate competition for resources and political attention between groups affected by the problem?
- Which levels or combination of levels of analysis (micro, meso, macro) exist in relation to the policy 'problem'?

3. Transformative intersectional assessment:

- Where and how can interventions be undertaken to improve the problem? Which key spaces or moments may serve as entry points to drive change in relation to the problem? What policy levers are available (for example, research/data, political allies, laws/regulations/conventions, resources)?
- What other examples of success exist? How could they be drawn upon in policy interventions?
- Who is involved in the proposed intervention? Who has the capacity to influence and implement the intervention?
- What role can the affected social groups play in these interventions? How can they be meaningfully involved in the process?
- At which level or combination of levels (micro, meso, macro) can interventions be undertaken?
- What are the feasible solutions in the short, medium and long term?
- How can the solutions be positioned and promoted in relation to the government's political priorities (for example, budgetary allocations, ministerial priorities and departmental plans)?
- How can the proposed solutions be synthesised into a clear and persuasive message?
- In what ways can the proposed policy responses reduce or mitigate inequalities?
- In what ways can the proposed responses contribute to transformations aimed at achieving social justice?
- How can it be ensured that the proposed responses do not reinforce existing stereotypes or biases, nor generate new inequalities for certain populations?
- How do the solutions interact with other existing policies?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for the proposed policy solutions?
- How can the implementation and adoption of the proposed responses be ensured?
- Who will be responsible (and who is best placed) to guarantee the implementation of the policy recommendations?
- What timelines and accountability mechanisms are envisaged for implementation?
- How do the policy solutions foster solidarity and coalition-building between diverse interests and groups?
- How can we know whether inequalities have been reduced? How can the implementation and outcomes of the policies be measured?
- Which intersectional factors will be measured in the assessment process? How will they be measured?
- What lessons and actions emerge from the assessment in terms of social justice?

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