

Scottish Government Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-25 Consultation

October 2022

Response by the City of Edinburgh Council

Section 1: Vision

In 2017, the Scottish Government set out our vision that: “Scotland's equality evidence base becomes more wide-ranging and robust, enabling national and local policy makers to develop sound, inclusive policy and measure the impact on all of Scotland's equality groups”. We would like to revisit this vision and gather views on whether the vision should be revised for the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-25.

Question 1.1

Do you think the Scottish Government should revise the vision developed in 2017?

Answer: No

Question 1.2

[For respondents who answered ‘Yes’ Question 1.1]

Please say how the Scottish Government should revise the vision:

Answer: N/A

Section 2: Proposed actions

The Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-25 will specify and define individual projects required to fill the gaps that have been identified. We have identified a number of proposed actions, as set out above in [Proposed Actions to Improve the Equality Evidence Base](#).

Question 2.1

To what extent do you think that the proposed actions would adequately deliver on our ambition for a robust and wide-ranging equality evidence base?

Answer: Partially

Question 2.2

Please set out your reasons for your answer:

Any expansion in the publication of data for any of the protected characteristics should improve the equalities evidence base but there are three issues we'd like to raise:

- Datasets where a significant proportion of the data is 'missing' or 'prefer not to say' may result in the publication of a skewed picture
- Datasets where the proportion/counts for some of the categories within a characteristic are so small that they are not published – while the withholding of the small numbers is appropriate it may result in a reduction in the usefulness of the dataset as a whole
- Collating any personal data should focus on where it can impact decision making. With finite resources, we need to ensure that broadening equalities evidence focuses on supporting strategically important projects or decisions which have the greatest impact on people's lives rather than generating a more comprehensive understanding of data relating to protective characteristics alone.

Question 3.1

From your perspective, what are the most important actions outlined in the draft improvement plan? Please select up to five.

Answer:

Action 3: Growing up in Scotland

Action 9: Social Security Official Statistics

Action 11: Scottish Welfare Fund

Action 28: ONS annual population survey

Action 33: Scottish Census 2022

Question 3.2

Please set out your reasons for your answer:

We've selected the datasets that cover the widest ranging population rather than the recommendations that cover smaller sections of the population (e.g. census – so whole population - rather than Looked after children). Datasets that cover whole population can be modelled for the local picture and used as evidence across a range of projects whereas datasets focused on specific subpopulations are most relevant for single projects.

We have also selected data sets which support work to help address the Council's priorities including:

- Opportunities for everyone via education (Growing up in Scotland Survey)
- Poverty (Social Security and Scottish Welfare Fund)

Question 4.1

Are there any proposed actions that you think should be revised?

Answer: No

Question 4.2

[For respondents who answer 'Yes' to Question 4.1]

Please tell us which actions you think should be revised and how:

Answer: N/A

Question 5.1

Answer: There are many costs and challenges to collecting, analysing and reporting equality data. The benefits of improved equality data are clear, but unfortunately data collection is expensive and every question that is added to a survey or to an administrative data collection will have a cost. That cost will be in financial programmes, staff resource in carrying out collection and analysis, cost of training and learning necessary to implement a new collection and understand its impact on service development and also, importantly, in the burden on respondents. The proposed actions in the draft improvement plan are achievable within existing resource constraints.

Are there any additional improvement actions that you think should be considered that are achievable within the 2023-25 time period?

Answer: Yes

Question 5.2

[For respondents who answered 'Yes' to Question 5.1]

Please tell us what additional improvement actions we should consider, and the reasons why these actions are important. For example, the groups who would benefit, or what information needs these actions would address.

Answer:

Consideration of any national dataset that can be published at a local authority level for the protected characteristics.

Question 6.1

The Scottish Government cannot take sole responsibility for providing information to address everything stakeholders would like to know. The range of interests, perspectives and expertise require different ways of collecting and accessing data and information by the public sector (e.g. Scottish Government, local authorities), academic institutions, the third sector (e.g. charities, social enterprises, think tanks) and from within the involved communities themselves. The Scottish Government welcomes collaboration with stakeholders to improve the equality evidence base.

Would you or your organisation like to collaborate with the Scottish Government on any of the proposed actions?

Answer: Yes

Question 6.2

[For respondents who answer 'Yes' to Question 6.1]

Please tell us which actions you would like to collaborate with the Scottish Government on (including the action number) and how:

Answer:

- We would want to be given the opportunity to collaborate on any of the recommendations that impact on Local Authority datasets in particular.
- We would be interested in collaborating on defining a national dataset to support any proposed national equality outcomes that may arise from the current review of the Scottish Specific equality duties that support the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Question 7.1

Are you aware of any other organisations, networks or individuals the Scottish Government should collaborate with to improve the equality evidence base?

Answer: Yes

Question 7.2

[For respondents who answer 'Yes' to Question 7.1]

Please tell us who the Scottish Government should collaborate with and, if applicable, on which of the proposed actions:

Answer:

- The Scottish Council Equality Network

Section 3: Use of equality evidence

'Equality evidence' refers to statistics and research across different themes for age, disability, race/ethnicity, sex/gender, religion, sexual orientation, transgender status, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership, plus "intersections" between these characteristics (e.g. younger women; minority ethnic disabled people; older trans people etc.).

Question 8.1

How often do you or your organisations use equality evidence?

Answer: Often

Question 8.2

[For respondents who answer "Often", "Occasionally" or "Rarely" to Question 8.1]Which equality evidence sources do you or your organisation use?

Answer:

Scottish Government's Equality Evidence Finder is our primary source

As an example, this is some of the evidence sources that we used to develop our equality outcomes:

Examples of national research:

[Is Scotland Fairer - Equality and Human Rights Commission 2018](#)

[The Digital Divide - 21st Century Challenges - Key Facts](#)

<https://www.gov.scot/news/getting-people-online/>

[Scottish Government Homelessness Statistics Bulletin 2019-2020](#)

[Crisis UK - Plan to end Homelessness 2019](#)

[Scottish Government - Ending Homelessness Together - Update to Action Plan - October 2020](#)

[Scottish Government - Fairer Scotland Disabled People Delivery Plan Update - September 2020](#)

[Scottish Government Social Renewal Advisory Board Report - January 2021](#)

[The Perceptions and Experiences of Black, Asian and Minority-Ethnic Young People in Scottish Schools - November 2019](#)

[Public Health Scotland - Overview of Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

Local evidence:

[Edinburgh Poverty Commission Final Report - Connections Theme - September 2020](#)

[Promoting Equality Update Oct 2020 - Education, Communities and Families Committee](#)

[Policy & Sustainability - Equalities Update - Includes Schools Update on Action Plan to address equality](#)
[Policy & Sustainability Committee - Response to Motion - Black Lives Matter - July 2020](#)
[A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Employment Action Plan - Progress Report - March 2020](#)

Question 8.3

*[For respondents who answer “Often”, “Occasionally” or “Rarely” to Question 8.1]
How do you or your organisation use equality evidence?*

Answer:

- We use it to understand the size and distribution of protected characteristic groups across the city to support a range of activities including strategic planning, Integrated Impact Assessments etc.
- We often seek out equality evidence for the purposes of undertaking impact assessments. However, sometimes the equality evidence is contextual and whilst not always used directly for analysis, can be valuable in understanding the challenges faced by, and the needs of specific groups.
- We also gather equality evidence to develop our equality outcomes. Sometimes, this evidence can be in the form of knowledge and experience of officers and feedback from engagement as well as robust statistical evidence.

Question 8.4

*[For respondents who answer “Often”, “Occasionally” or “Rarely” to Question 8.1]
How do you or your organisation usually access equality evidence?*

Answer:

We use a range of data sources (including ONS, SG Equality Evidence Finder); engagement activities including public consultation and with specific stakeholder groups (e.g. the Equality and Rights Network, funded by the City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian); and evidence from published research

Question 9.1

Do you face any barriers to using equality evidence?

Answer:

Yes

Question 9.2

[For respondents who answer 'Yes' to Question 9.1]

Please tell us about the barriers you have faced (e.g. difficulties accessing the equality evidence you require, available equality evidence not being relevant to your needs, insufficient sample size for the statistics you require):

Answer:

- Barriers include Equalities information not being available at the required geography or intersectionality
- Different research/surveys/national data can provide equality evidence that is all slightly different because of the inconsistency of language, inconsistency in categories used, or inconsistency in the method of gathering the information. This can make it difficult to know which evidence to use.

Question 10.1

Are there any decisions you are unable to make because of a lack of equality evidence? (For example, Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), policy development, service delivery)

Answer: Yes

Question 10.2

[For respondents who answer 'Yes' to Question 10.1]Please tell us which questions you are unable to answer and why those questions are important to answer (e.g. what policies or practices could be informed by answering those questions').

Answer:

- The gap in information relates to the relative levels of need of different groups within the population (e.g. males/females; certain BAME groups) including whether gaps exist or not.
- Some groups who share protected characteristics may need to access some of our services (e.g. social housing) at a higher rate than other groups in the population. However, if we do not hold this baseline information of disproportionately high levels of need/use, evidence of whether we are meeting the needs of these group is difficult to acquire. It can then be difficult for the organisation to approve expenditure or resource to advance equalities if there is no evidence to support it being needed
- This can also work conversely. For example, if we have a disproportionate number of females accessing parent support services is this because they are more likely to require the support or is it because men do not feel comfortable accessing this type of support but equally require it? What do our stats tell us about further action required to promote this service if we don't know what we are aiming to achieve re. diversity of participants?

Section 4: Equality evidence collection

Question 11.1

Do you or your organisation produce any equality evidence sources? For example, do your organisation involve stakeholders in finding out what issues they think are important through surveys or focus groups, pull together or carry out your own analysis of existing information, or commission independent research and analysis.

Answer: Yes

Question 11.2

[For respondents who answer 'Yes' to Question 11.1]

Which equality evidence sources do you or your organisation produce?

Answer:

Through research, engagements and consultations undertaken by individual services and corporately we involve stakeholders and monitor their views. These are analysed by us, and in some cases paid consultants, and in some cases results and data will be published. The extent to which equalities information forms part of those exercises and reporting is dependent on their subject matter – see 11.4.

Question 11.3

[For respondents who answer 'Yes' to Question 11.1]

Are there any barriers to you or your organisation collecting more equality evidence?

Answer: Yes

Question 11.4

[For respondents who answer 'Yes' to Question 11.3]

Please tell us about the barriers facing you or your organisation in collecting more equality evidence:

Answer:

The Council has carried out a number of initiatives to improve the equalities information from existing employees, and while this has led to considerable improvements, we do not yet have complete records of sex, gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, etc. for all employees.

The Council's approach to gathering equalities information from residents and other stakeholders is "as needed". This approach means only asking, as part of surveys, engagements, consultations, for equalities information which obviously relates to the

subject on a case-by-case basis. (Where we gather information we use Scottish Government's harmonised demographic question set). This means that it is unusual for our surveys, etc. to gather information about sexual identity, since most of our customers do not consider this relevant to most of our services, and can find this question intrusive.

Where information is gathered, unless that information is gathered through a large randomised or quota-sampled survey, it is likely that we will not have sufficient views from minority populations to report these with confidence. Where surveys, etc. are especially relevant to a minority group, special measures are usually introduced (such as over-sampling, focus groups, other qualitative methods) to ensure the views of relevant minority populations are included in decision-making. While this is easy to report to committee through normal report processes, it is difficult to summarise and impossible to compile from across different exercises, making organisation-wide reporting impractical and of limited use.