

MEASURING



DIVERSITY



IN LIBERAL
ORGANISATIONS

MEASURING **DIVERSITY** IN LIBERAL ORGANISATIONS

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MEASURING DIVERSITY IN POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

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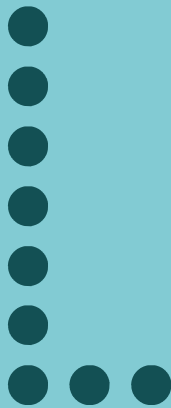
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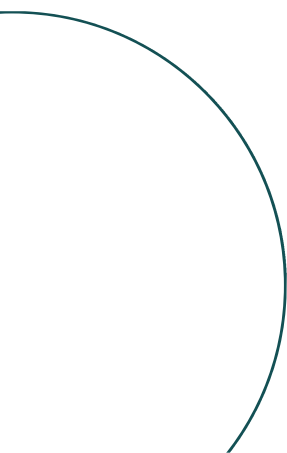
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**" DIVERSITY
IS A LIBERAL
VALUE. "**



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



LUIS CANO

As a trainer and consultant, Luis Cano works with political organisations to optimise their structures and their membership engagement, especially on inclusion strategies.

In his 9 years of professional experience in the corporate sector, Luis developed knowledge of Organisational Development, Talent Management, Employee Relations, Corporate Governance, and External Affairs. In the last 7 years as a consultant in the civil and political sector, Luis used this knowledge to facilitate the different needs of the organisations Luis worked for. Luis is the Director and Founder of the Rainbow Platform.

Luis was born in Venezuela and lived in 4 different countries before becoming the Hungarian man he is today. His contribution to ensuring that populism stops spreading is to use his knowledge and serve as a trainer and consultant to organisations that share a vision to improve democracy, civic engagement, and transparency.



HADIATOU BARRY

Hadiatou Barry (26) is a public speaker, social entrepreneur, and the diversity officer of the Dutch political party D66. From a young age Hadiatou was interested in politics and international affairs. She has an educational background in European Studies and International Relations.

In 2020 Hadiatou joined D66 and soon after decided that it was important to not merely be a member of a political party but to also participate. As a young Black Muslim woman with a refugee background, Hadiatou ticks many diversity boxes. She is aware that it is not typical for a person like her to be represented by politicians in parliament. People in politics simply do not look like her. This is one of the many reasons why she is dedicated to help D66 become a party in which all members are welcome, feel seen and included and can take initiative to participate. Hadiatou strongly believes in the importance of representation; she is of the opinion that people cannot dream of becoming something they have never seen before. With her work as a diversity officer, she hopes that she can lower the threshold to participate in politics for the members of her party as well as inspire people to understand the importance of being inclusive and welcoming. Hadiatou is optimistic in her hopes that one day politicians in European countries will be representative of their society. That is a society in which children regardless of their sexuality, gender, background or disability can dream of becoming politicians.



NIENKE GRAS

Nienke Gras (26) a Dutch woman from the Netherlands. Nienke has a bachelor's degree in History obtained at the University of Utrecht, where she followed the track International Relations in a Historical Perspective in which she specialised in conflict, violence and security.

After finishing her bachelor's, Nienke obtained a master's degree in Organization and Management Studies at Tilburg University. Here she followed the track Organizing for Global Social Challenges, in which the role of different types of organizations are considered in tackling global societal challenges through different interventions.

In 2021, Nienke started working at the National Office of D66, because of her interest in politics, as an intern. One of the main tasks was to set up the Diversity and Inclusion Think-thanks, which were organised as the starting point for the development of important documents regarding Diversity and Inclusion for D66. After her internship, Nienke kept working for the National Office of D66 as a Junior Advisor in Talent Development. A role in which she and her colleagues, in collaboration with various committees in the association, are responsible for the scouting and development of talents by providing training and education for members of D66. In addition, Nienke and her team offer guidance and support for list advisory committees during elections. Together with Hadiatou Barry, Nienke also ensures that diversity and inclusion initiatives are of paramount importance in the association of D66.



MARGUERITE O'LOUGHLIN

Marguerite studied Property Economics at Dublin Technological University (DTU) but was bitten by the politics bug when elected President of the DTU Students Union in 2021. Following two years in the role, Marguerite started working for Fianna Fáil as a Parliamentary Assistant in the Irish Parliament.

She worked for various Senators and TDs until 2013 when she moved to Fianna Fail Headquarters to take up the role of Regional Organiser. In 2019 she moved into the role of National Women's and Equality Officer. Marguerite also worked as Special Adviser to the Minister for European Affairs Thomas Byrne TD in 2021.

Marguerite is very passionate about Women's participation in politics and was herself a local election candidate for Fianna Fáil in 2004 and 2009. In her role as Women's and Equality Officer for the party, she supported and promoted women at all levels of the organisation.

She organised regular training for the women Councillors and Local Area Reps and worked closely with the Fianna Fáil Women's Network to encourage and foster women within the party. Marguerite also facilitated and championed the other equality networks within the party, the LGBTQI+ Network, Disability Network and Migrants' Network to ensure Fianna Fáil was a diverse and inclusive place for everyone.

Marguerite currently works in Communications and Government Affairs and also heads up Culture in her organisation. She is married to Conor and they have two children Daithí (6) and Alannah (4). She enjoys playing badminton, socialising and walking her dogs Boots and Bingo. Her two favourite quotes are 'if you stand for nothing, you fall for everything' and 'its better to have tried and failed, than failing to try'. She believes in going out there, standing for something and trying your best to be the change you want to see in the world!



DÓRA KIS-JAKAB

Dóra Kis-Jakab is affiliated with the Hungarian opposition political party, Momentum Mozgalom. Her expertise lies in outlining political strategies, overseeing the party's organizational network, and selecting political candidates.

With a particular emphasis on the country's upcoming local elections, Dóra leverages her experience to enhance the party's success both at the grassroots and the higher levels by optimizing internal processes and ensuring a diverse pool of candidates.

Having earned her degree in political philosophy from ELTE and CEU, Dóra previously worked as a researcher at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, specializing in liberal political philosophy and applied ethics. Transitioning from theoretical research of political justice to political action, she joined Momentum with the aim of combating injustices within the current Hungarian political landscape.

In 2022, Dóra served as the Deputy Party Secretary during parliamentary elections. Presently, she holds the position of Deputy Head of the Party's Operational Directorate overseeing the party's organization and network, and leads the strategy division. While dedicating most of her working days to providing strategic and technical support for political decision-makers, her overarching objective is to create a more just and equitable framework for all members of the party.



NANDOR TOTH

Nandor Toth is a political technology expert focusing on poltech software and data-driven campaigning. He graduated in international politics at Corvinus University of Budapest and worked as a journalist focusing on foreign affairs and global economics.

Later on, his focus shifted towards big data in online communication. This led to Accenture: Nandor joined the global IT consultant company where worked for years as an IT Project Manager on various corporate projects across Germany. The next was communication technology: as a Digital Campaign Manager, he managed communication automation projects.

His career in politics started at Momentum, a centrist-liberal political party in Hungary. He joined the party to fight against the Orban regime and was quickly promoted to Head of Digital and Data at the party's operational staff. He filled this position for two campaigns: in the primaries of the Hungarian opposition in 2021 and the parliamentary elections in 2022. Currently, he is the co-founder and the Chief Data Officer at Stateless, a software developer company focusing on digital solutions for campaigns and elections. Their projects include election monitoring in third-world countries, engagement and large language model projects at NGOs, and online campaigning tool development.



ABOUT ELF

European Liberal Forum (ELF) is the official political foundation of the European Liberal Party, the ALDE Party. Together with 59 member organisations, we work all over Europe to bring new ideas into the political debate, provide a platform for discussion, and empower citizens to make their voices heard.

ELF was founded in 2007 to strengthen the liberal and democratic movement in Europe. Our work is guided by liberal ideals and a belief in the principle of freedom. We stand for a future-oriented Europe that offers opportunities for every citizen. ELF is engaged on all political levels, from the local to the European. We bring together a diverse network of national foundations, think tanks, and other experts. At the same time, we are also close to, but independent from, the ALDE Party and other Liberal actors in Europe. In this role, our forum serves as a space for an open and informed exchange of views between a wide range of different actors. → liberalforum.eu

INTRO

BY LUIS CANO

The importance of diversity for liberalism

Being a liberal is challenging in today's polarised climate. In a world where many seek simple answers, our ideology often pushes us to provide complex solutions to overly simplified problems or, in some cases, not even genuine ones. There is a tendency from conservatives and progressives to embrace extreme positions and place individuals into categorical boxes, fostering a climate where anything divergent is feared and those who embrace complexity are at risk of being canceled.

We are witnessing a surge in anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric which attempts to oversimplify complex issues like individual freedom and self-determination. In many locations, what was formerly merely rhetoric has become real governing policies. This rhetoric extends beyond its anti-LGBTQI+ spotlight; it opposes women standing up for equal rights, minorities for daring to join politics instead of confining themselves to the civil sector, youth daring to dream, and the elderly for reminding us how the past should never be repeated. Ultimately, this rhetoric stands in direct opposition to the very values liberals uphold.

It is a matter of pride to be a liberal these days. Our parties stand for equality, not because we want to put people into boxes but because we see everyone as equal. Our emphasis focuses on the individual. Concentrating on individual freedoms is embracing diversity, embracing that we are all different and yet free to pursue happiness in our own understanding of it. Being a liberal is a matter of pride because we see the complexity and understand that we cannot confine everyone within a singular box.

Liberalism's fundamental philosophical core is that all people are equal before the law, that is, that each of us is born with equal worth and should have an equal opportunity to achieve our own goals. Being a liberal means opposing conservative forces that dictate particular behaviors and rejecting ideologies that try to force people into particular identities. To be a liberal demands tolerance, as we believe in freedom of speech and thought. In that way, being a liberal means standing against the woke movement, which seeks to cancel anyone daring to question prevailing norms. A cornerstone of liberalism is the acceptance of diversity because we fight for the rights of each individual independently of their background or circumstances. We champion diversity, grounded in the principles of tolerance and individual rights... Diversity is indeed a liberal value!

Yet, the human need to group ourselves often blinds people from understanding the value of individual freedom. Many desire a strong leader, and many individuals want to fight for the interests of their own group and see others as competitors. This phenomenon persists even within the LGBTQI+ community, where certain groups reject the concept of diversity, focusing only on one letter over another. Civil society organizations representing specific groups, for instance, fight each other for resources and often need to remember the intersectionality and complexity of what it means to be human and an individual. Ironically, those putting labels and grouping people are the ones who claim to be "diverse." They have claimed ownership over what diversity is, which has become so mainstream that many liberals fear the word itself.

Nevertheless, diversity is a liberal value because we do not only see a gay man or a woman with disabilities, we see an individual encompassing all their complexities. Neither the progressive left nor the green movement owns the word diversity. To be fair, they also have a commitment towards diversity. They do not have exclusive ownership of the concept. I would argue that any ideology trying to limit freedom of speech for the sake of diversity is betraying the very essence of diversity itself. As liberals, we should not fear using a keyword representing our values. We have a lot of work to do to embrace diversity more, and we should not hesitate. It is in our liberal DNA.

Diversity is also a critical pragmatic concept for us to embrace. As I mentioned earlier, it is not easy to be a liberal these days. Our political parties are often stuck in the 5% voter threshold trap. This means many of our parties need to use diversity as a strategic tool to engage with wider audiences and to reach audiences disenchanted by conservatism and wokeism. We need diverse audiences to make our liberal agendas the governing ones.

From a pragmatic perspective, we need to make our candidates reflect the individuals they aim to represent. We must prepare all our politicians to advocate a message of tolerance and commit to fighting for the individual, no matter how different the individual may be from the politician. We need to make our parties more welcoming to people who believe liberal organizations are exclusive clubs. We need to remind the voter that liberals are committed to standing for equality, including the commitment to encourage members of underrepresented communities to join office and active political life.

● MEASURING DIVERSITY IN LIBERAL ORGANISATIONS

In writing this piece for the first publication of the Rainbow Platform, I urgently call to return to our foundational liberal principles. Past economic policies have indeed left many behind, but as liberals today, we are fighting so we all have a fair chance to be free. I write this from my perspective as a gay immigrant, a European of Latino descent, and a Hungarian. My identity and background did not lead me to believe in diversity. My liberal values did. Above all those things that might define me, I am a liberal because I strive for others to look at my individuality rather than the historical context that defines me. In a truly open and free society, we should thrive not for the things that divide us but for our humanity, uniting us. Diversity is the liberal rhetoric. Diversity is the liberal policy, diversity is a liberal value. ●





MEASURING DIVERSITY IN LIBERAL ORGANISATIONS

THEORY

THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN INCLUSIVE LIBERAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

BY HADIATOU BARRY & NIENKE GRAS

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, numerous civil rights movements have brought to light the glaring lack of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. While gender diversity has been a longstanding focus for organizations worldwide, the #MeToo movement revealed the need for safe working environments for women, propelling the momentum for gender inclusion within workplaces. (1) In a world entrenched by a binary understanding of gender, the trans movement has played a pivotal role in raising awareness of the importance of allowing individuals to self-identify in the workplace without fear of harassment.

Simultaneously, the LGBTQI+ movement continues to advocate for its members' right to be themselves and love whomever they choose. This has resulted in more visible representation in the media and more acceptance in the workplace. These movements have sparked conversations on the importance of diversity and inclusion initiatives especially within organizations. (2) Furthermore, following the tragic death of George Floyd on the 25th of May 2020, in the United States, the global community rallied behind the Black Lives Matter movement and called for actions to be taken against institutional racism. In the wake of these events, organizations in the United States and Europe pledged to do better, committing themselves to ensure greater diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives within their companies. (3)

1 - HEC (2023), 'How Inclusive Corporate Culture Matters in the #MeToo Era', 21 April,

2 - K. Steinmetz for Times (2014), 'The Transgender Tipping Point', 29 May,

3 - P. Guadiano for Forbes (2022), 'Two Years After George Floyd's Murder, Is Your DEI Strategy Performative Or Sustainable?', 27 June

In the Netherlands, this resulted in many organizations hiring diversity officers to work on said initiatives. Representation through diversity has since become a cornerstone in politics for Green, Social, and Liberal Dutch political parties. However, the challenge of creating diverse party lists persists for most parties, mainly due to the lack of diversity within their member bases, which is where party lists are derived from. As a result, the party lists of numerous political organizations in the Netherlands predominantly showcase white, male candidates. While it's important to note that, as of January 1, 2022, 4,438,900 citizens are of non-Dutch/Frisian origin, making up only around 25% of the population, the question arises: Are we taking all necessary steps to ensure that party lists truly mirror the diversity of contemporary Dutch society? (4)

It is not surprising that in recent years much research has been conducted to provide organisations with an understanding of how to manage diversity and inclusion. Interestingly, existing literature on diversity and inclusion tends to primarily focus on the benefits of diversity within teams or (mostly for-profit) organizations, often overlooking the aspect of inclusion. In addition, there is rarely a focus in the literature on the importance of diversity and inclusion within political organizations. There is thus a gap in the literature that this contribution aims to fill.

It is important to understand that in the existing body of literature, two important contradictory claims are being made about diversity in relation to efficiency within organizations. On the one hand, it is argued that increasing the number of traditionally underrepresented groups in organizations can bolster a team's efficiency by eliminating obstacles related to minority status, paving the way for optimal productivity. (5) On the other hand, it is argued that expanding the representation of traditionally marginalized groups in organizations could be perceived as a threat by the majority. For example, the advancement of women in professional spheres might trigger discriminatory behavior from men to curtail the increasing influence of women, resulting in an unintended contradictory outcome. Both claims are supported within literature. This means that diversity is a 'double-edged sword'. Managing and valuing diversity can increase productivity, generate more innovative ideas, and competitive advantage. However, unmanaged diversity increases may lead to friction within the organisation. (6)

Diversity must be appropriately managed to generate positive outcomes. (7) Merely focusing on diversity alone is not enough. Appropriately managing diversity is not only about increasing the number of traditionally underrepresented groups, but also about transforming the diversity on the work floor into an inclusive environment. For a liberal organisation to embody inclusivity, it must be open, welcoming, and allow everyone to participate within the organisation. True inclusion means not only inviting employees or members of a political organisation to the metaphorical party but also encouraging and empowering them to actively contribute to the organisation's planning and execution.

4 - CBS (2022), accessed in November 2023

5 - R. J. Ely and D. A. Thomas (2001), 'Cultural Diversity at Work', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46 (2) 229-273

6 - B. Mazur (2010), 'Cultural diversity in organisational theory and practice', *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 2 (2), 5-15.

7 - R. Andrews, et al. (2005), 'Representative Bureaucracy, Organizational Strategy, ...', 15 (4) 489-504.

Consequently, the pivotal question emerges: what advantages come with being an inclusive liberal political organization? This publication aims to answer this question through a dual approach—firstly, by examining existing literature and secondly, by conducting a case study of Democraten66 (D66), which has already implemented numerous diversity and inclusion initiatives. Through the examination of this case study, the publication aims to gain a deeper understanding of the benefits of being an inclusive liberal political organization.

The section is structured as follows: first, a definition of a diverse and inclusive liberal political organization is provided. Second, it draws overarching general conclusions about the benefits of being such an organization. The third section delves into an investigation of the measures implemented by D66 to ensure and promote diversity and inclusion within their political organization. What are the benefits derived from their initiatives and what lessons can be learned from the implementation and outcomes of these initiatives? Finally, some additional observations and a conclusion section contextualize the case study in a broader context and highlight the importance of developing a tool to measure the perception of diversity and inclusion in political organizations.

2. LIBERALISM AND INCLUSION

Liberals believe that economic welfare is essential to provide people with adequate livelihoods. The basic rule of this political stream remains that people should be able to provide for themselves and enjoy the fruits of their labor. In addition, the liberty of individuals is at the core of the liberal organization. Liberals worldwide strive to support everyone to be who they are, love who they want, and believe what they wish. Accordingly, these freedoms will be defended provided that they do not compromise the rights of others. (8)



**THE IDEA THAT
A PERSON
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PRACTICE.**

The liberal ideal of individual liberty is in essence linked to the concept of inclusion. To explain, the idea that a person should be able to choose who they are and how they identify (Individual liberty) and be welcomed and allowed to participate in an organization (inclusion) is an inclusive practice. The inclusive liberal organization in this manner is one that ensures that individuals with different backgrounds and identities retain their individuality and flourish within the organization. (9)

8 – European Liberal Democrats, The little Liberal Book: Guide for political party work, (ELDR Party, 2011).

9 – L. Sherbin and R. Rashid (2017), 'Diversity Doesn't Stick Without Inclusion', Harvard Business Review, 1 February 2017



2.1 What is a diverse and inclusive liberal political organization?

The term 'inclusion' has various definitions. In this paper, inclusion is defined as the process of actively incorporating individuals into organizations and activities where they were previously excluded, while also recognizing and appreciating them for their unique identities. This entails that in order to be inclusive, organizations must diversify their workforce and more importantly, implement policies that ensure everyone within the organization feels seen and is heard. Within an inclusive organization, the views of people pertaining to a minority group are equally considered, especially in decision-making as those of a dominant group. This ensures that people feel included. To emphasize, psychologists Abraham Maslow (1954) and Leon Festinger (1950) believed that the need to be recognized and to feel included were part of the basic human necessities. (10) When a person feels included, they experience a sense of belonging to their organization. Consequently, this translates into that person reciprocating that feeling of belonging with an attitude that will be beneficial to that organization.

A diverse organization is one that has employees with different backgrounds and perspectives that foster creativity and innovation. Traditionally, political organizations have been male-dominated. While there has been a shift in this paradigm, optimal representation, that is representation of all different types of people including minority representation, and inclusion, remains a challenge for most (political) organisations. (11) To illustrate, human beings are diverse and complex in nature with a great variety in mindset and behavior. Despite organizations making strides in diversifying their employee demographics in recent years, the organizational cultures have often remained largely homogeneous. While diversity is recognized as crucial for organizational success, the widespread absence of inclusive practices poses a significant challenge. This is detrimental to organizations and consequently, creates hostile work environments for employees that do not identify with the identities of the dominant culture. This is because organizations tend to have an organizational culture that centers around a specific group of people namely white, male, and hetero. (12)

Having a diverse employee base does not necessarily mean that an organization is inclusive. Different dimensions of diversity play a role. It is, therefore, increasingly important to ensure that a work environment that claims to be diverse has an organizational culture that aspires to heterogeneity. Being inclusive therefore requires organizations to adapt to the extent that everyone within the organization despite their diverse characteristics is included and not expected to assimilate into the dominant culture. (13)

10 - B. C. Hayes (2002), 'Creating Inclusive Organizations: Its Meaning and Measurement', PhD Dissertation, Old Dominion University.

11 - Liberal International (2020), Beyond the Numbers. Handbook of Best Practices on Gender based Political Party Inclusivity, February 2020.

12 - H. Welcher and A. Louise (2019) 'Diversity Is Who We Are', Doctoral dissertation, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

13 - B. M. Ferdman (2017) 'Paradoxes of Inclusion', The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 53(2), 235-263.



**IT IS
NECESSARY TO
EXPLORE THE
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OF BEING AN
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ORGANIZATION.**

However, changing a company's organizational culture to promote an inclusive workplace is a difficult undertaking. This is due to the gradual and time-consuming nature of change. It is imperative that new procedures and adjustments are implemented during this transformative process to avoid alienating the organization's dominant groups. Diversity should not be seen as something foreign and polarising, but rather as a vital and unifying component. The existing feelings and behaviors of organizations' dominant groups, therefore, need to be taken into consideration to ensure support within the organization and create a sense of understanding and agency among all employees. (14)

Considering that a definition of a diverse and inclusive liberal political organization is given, and the possible pitfalls are identified, it is necessary to explore the advantages of being an inclusive liberal political organization.

2.2 What are the benefits of being an inclusive liberal political organization?

Democracy refers to a governance system where power is derived from the consent of the people. There are two main types: direct democracy, where citizens directly vote on laws and decisions. And indirect democracy, where individuals elect representatives, like a parliament or council, to make decisions on their behalf. Representative democracies are characterized by political parties. In a democracy, citizens influence government policy by voting for their party of choice. In the realm of politics, parties serve as mouthpieces for varied perspectives within society. It is intrinsic for citizens to gravitate towards those political organizations that echo their sentiments, ensuring that their voices and worldview are represented. (15) The inclusive liberal political organization consists of different layers that overlap. Inclusivity within the political organisation can therefore bring different benefits per layer. The various benefits will be discussed in the following section.

The initial layer of the liberal political organization is the most publicly visible consisting of the representatives of the political organisation. Think for example of the recognizable political faces in the House of Representatives and the European Parliament, with their accompanying factions and policymakers.

14 - K. Bouchallikht and Z. Papaikononou, *De Inclusie Marathon: over diversiteit en gelijkwaardigheid op de werkvloer* (Amsterdam University Press 2021).

15 - K. Celis, et al. (2010), *Gehoord, gezien, vertegenwoordigd? Diversiteit in de Belgische politiek* (Academia Press).

16 - R. Andrews, et al. (2005), 'Representative Bureaucracy, Organizational Strategy, and Public Service Performance'.

The role of these representatives is to serve the population and ensure that the ideals of the political party are translated into policy for society. The concept of 'representative bureaucracy' underscores the significance of having diverse and inclusive representatives, forming a core characteristic of this idea. This concept can be defined as the idea that public organizations should look like the population they serve. (16) The central argument is that organizations in the public domain will be more responsive to the public's needs if they reflect the demographic characteristics of their citizens. In a diverse society, organizations that are more representative of their population are likely to contain staff with a wider range of values and views that are representative of the entire society. (17)

Therefore, incorporating perspectives from marginalized groups highlights and addresses the challenges faced by these communities, leading to broader societal benefits, both socially and economically. (18) For example, feminist theorists argue that the presence of women in parliaments offers possibilities in the sense that these women are not just 'standing as' women, but 'acting for' women as a group in society. (19) In the context of inclusive liberal political organizations, the aim is to involve every individual in the decision-making process, resulting in policies that encompass the interests of every societal group.

Thus, it is important that all the diverse groups are represented in this first layer of the liberal political organization. This means that the representatives, factions, and policymakers of the political organization must comprise a diverse mix of people. As a result, the liberal political organisation will contain a variety of perspectives and therefore establish inclusive policies that integrate the interests of society. The political organization will thus essentially become representative of its society. Given the inherent understanding of the representation of diverse demographics, an inclusive liberal political organization is better equipped to adapt to societal changes (20), and by championing the rights and concerns of all groups, inclusive liberal political organizations can reduce societal tensions and foster unity.

The second layer comprises the members of the political liberal organization, the association. These members form the member base of the political organization but also serve as the pool from which new representatives are drawn. That is why an inclusive liberal political organization aims to have a diverse member base. This can be achieved by inclusive procedures that are designed in such a way that everyone feels welcome to join the association and does not experience any barriers to becoming active.

These procedures and the daily functioning of the liberal political organization are provided by the organization of the political association, constituting the third layer.

17 - 'Ibidem'.

18 - Inclusive America (no date), <https://inclusiveamerica.org/why-diversity-is-important>

19 - J. Lovenduski and P. Norris (2003), 'Westminster Women: The Politics of Presence', *Political Studies*, 51(1), 84-102.

20 - B. Mazur (2010), 'Cultural diversity in organisational theory and practice'.

Employees of the political organization are executives of the organization, which means they organize the daily functioning of the organization. Whereas representatives and their policymakers focus on the implementation of the organization's election manifesto. Think for example about organizing events, campaigns, congresses, and internal elections. When the internal organization is inclusive, this will ensure that diversity and inclusion are considered in these daily processes and activities. Literature states that within inclusive environments employees tend to display higher levels of commitment, innovation, and loyalty, compared to homogeneous work environments. (21) Most importantly, the employees in inclusive organizations, where diversity is being embraced, feel more comfortable expressing their ideas and perspectives. (22) Moreover, these different perspectives lead to more innovative and sustainable ideas. (23)

Furthermore, the representation of underrepresented people in politics goes beyond improving the quality of decision-making for society or more commitment to the organization or generating innovative ideas. The political scene and the organizations and institutions that belong to this scene are always visible to everyone in society at any time on different levels; globally, nationally, regionally, and locally. Diverse role models on every level are therefore of great importance. Besides addressing political issues, role models might encourage other underrepresented individuals to enter the political arena themselves and become politically active or inspire others to become a member of, or an employee of a political organization. (24) Underrepresented individuals may feel a sense of belonging and are even more likely to join a political organization, which widens the member and/or support base (25) of political organizations, which is beneficial for the survival of political organizations.

In addition, the minority groups that are underrepresented in politics also serve as role model groups for each other. Minority groups, encompassing women, ethnic minorities, the disabled, LGBTQI+ individuals, and others, are frequently discussed collectively when addressing underrepresentation. However, the opportunities for political mobilization within and across groups differ substantially. (26) The progress achieved in women's political representation in certain nations acts as a beacon, encouraging improved representation for other visible minorities. (27)

In conclusion, there are several benefits to being an inclusive liberal political organization. First, for society, it is beneficial to have a liberal political organization that represents and reflects society and therefore makes inclusive decisions and policies that consider the different groups in society. Second, inclusion provides visible role models who inspire individuals or minority groups to become politically engaged or active, which widens the member and/or support base of the liberal political organization.

21 - F. G. Stevens, et al. (2008), 'Unlocking the Benefits of Diversity ...', *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 44 (1) 116-133.

22 - F. G. Stevens, et al. (2008), 'Unlocking the Benefits of Diversity All-Inclusive Multiculturalism and Positive Organizational Change'.

23 - R. Andrews, et al. (2005), 'Representative Bureaucracy, Organizational Strategy, and Public Service Performance'.

24 - C. Wolbrecht and D. E. Campbell (2007), 'Leading by Example ...', *American Journal of Political Science*, 51 (4), 921-939.

25 - The member base are people who are officially member of the political party. The support base is people who vote for the organisation.



This benefit is also applied to the organization of the political association. A diverse employee base actively incorporating inclusive practices in daily activities contributes to a more open and welcoming environment for association members, creating an appealing workplace with higher levels of commitment and innovative, sustainable ideas.

3. CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: D66

3.1 Case description

Democraten 66 more commonly known as D66 is a Dutch social liberal party that was founded in 1966, hence the name. The ideology and character of the party have remained unchanged over the years. The party is committed to good education, a strong and decisive Europe, individual freedoms, and a sustainable, future-proof economy. (28) In 2021, the party achieved a historic victory in the House of Representative elections, garnering over 1.5 million votes. This propelled D66 to become the second-largest party of the Netherlands securing 24 representatives in the Parliament along with 6 ministers and secretaries of state. Beyond the robust campaign and the introduction of new female leadership, (29) a significant factor contributing to this success could be that a lot of Dutch voters felt represented by the diverse party list. For example, the gender distribution was nearly equal, with close to a 50/50 split. About 23% of the candidates had a bicultural or migration background (a much truer reflection of the Dutch population), of which 5 were in the top 20 and 11 were in the top 40. Additionally, the LGBTI+ community was well-represented with 11 candidates, 8 of whom secured positions in the top 40. The youngest candidate was 19 years old and the oldest was 64. Furthermore, the candidates represented all regions, rural and urban, across the Netherlands. (30)

The social-liberal party D66 is thus characterized by its progressive nature, and willingness to commit to diversity and inclusion initiatives. In 2018 members of the party took the initiative to start a diversity network in addition to the already existing female network (Elst Borst Netwerk) and LGBTQI+ Network (Pride66). 3 years later in 2021, the organisation's board formally received the 'Handreiking and Slotverklaring Diversiteit en Inclusie' (Guide and Final Declaration on Diversity and Inclusion). (31)

26 - K. Bird (2005), 'The Political Representation of Visible Minorities in Electoral Democracies', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 11 (4) 425-465.
27 - 'Ibidem'.

28 - D66 (no date), 'De Geschiedenis van D66 – al 56 jaar D66', <https://d66.nl/vereniging/56-jaar-d66/>

29 - In its long political history, the Netherlands has never had a female president. There are more female party leaders in the Netherlands, but Kaag was the first to have a serious chance of becoming the first female president of the Netherlands, under the slogan 'new leadership'. Because D66 became the second largest party under her leadership, Kaag became the first female Minister of Finance in 2022. She also holds the title for first female minister of Foreign Affairs.

30 - D66 (no date), 'D66 presenteert kandidatenlijst Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 2021'.

31 - The handreiking and slotverklaring diversiteit en inclusie are two documents created by two independent committees consisting of members of D66 that advised for more diversity and inclusion within the party. Hereafter, the english translation will be used: Compass Diversity & Inclusion, "Guidance Diversity & Inclusion", and the "Final Statement."

As a result, the leadership established a new board position, namely a board member dedicated to inclusion and projects, to ensure that the subjects of diversity and inclusion remain on the organization's agenda. In addition, the board made diversity and inclusion the first pillar of its strategic plan for 2022-2026. With these steps, the party opted for a proactive approach. Consecutively, the board created a paid position to execute its strategic goals. This resulted in hiring a diversity officer the following year to execute these objectives. With this, D66 became one of the few liberal political organizations in Europe with a diversity officer.

D66 is composed of multiple layers, as discussed in the section above. At the core of D66, are the members of the association. The members are 'the heart' of D66 and construct D66 as a liberal political organization. In 2021-2022, D66 counted around 30,000 members. (32) The National Office is at the service of this association and its members, making it the second layer of D66. The National Office is responsible for the organizational side of the political organization which include events, campaigns, membership administration, congresses, and internal elections. (33)

The third layer are the representatives in the House of Representatives, European Parliament, Deputies in Provincial States, Council members, etc., and their associated factions and employees. These individuals represent the 'hands' of D66 that make and shape policy for society. The representatives mostly come from the membership base of the D66 association. Therefore, the goal is to obtain a diverse membership base, so that this ensures convergence of diverse representatives in society in which everyone in that society can recognise themselves and who make inclusive decisions and policies for everyone in this society. It is the task of the National Office to actively promote inclusivity in the association to appeal to and recruit as many diverse members as possible.

The next section focuses on the initiatives taken by the National Office of D66, in collaboration with other actors within the association, to become a more inclusive liberal political organisation. What specific initiatives have been implemented? What are the benefits derived from it? And what lessons can be learned from D66 in the process of working towards a more diverse and inclusive organisation?

32 - D66 (no date), 'Feiten en cijfers over D66'

33 - D66 (no date), 'Het Landelijk Bureau van D66'

3.2 Unlocking inclusion: how D66 implements inclusion initiatives

3.2.1 Documenting key reports

As outlined in the case description, D66 has published several documents in recent years, including noteworthy ones such as 'the Compass Diversity & Inclusion', 'Guidance Diversity & Inclusion', and the 'Final Statement.' These documents attempt to set out the organization's perspective on diversity and inclusion. D66's objective is to establish an association in which everyone who agrees with social liberalism can participate in decision-making and feel heard and seen.



**THE
EMPHASIS ON
INCLUSIVITY
IS A PRIMARY
OBJECTIVE.**

The first steps to realise this were taken several years ago, with the establishment of the D66 diversity network. In 2021, through collaborative efforts between the diversity and inclusion think tank, Route66, and some D66 members, the final statement and guidance were written and presented. These documents aim to provide strategies for an inclusive association. In response to the recommendations made in these documents, the National Board of D66 made certain organizational changes. The documents were used as input for D66's Strategic Plan 2022-2026. In this plan emphasis on inclusivity is a primary objective. As a result, a board member and a project leader specifically focused on diversity and inclusion were introduced. While strategic documents lay out intentions, actionable tools like the 'Inclusion Compass' provide a practical approach for the association. The compass is structured around four main directives: 'Promote mutual understanding', 'Be Inclusive', 'Ensure diversity in representation', and 'Take responsibility in interactions'.

Tangible reference points and tools

Documenting norms and values concerning diversity and inclusion (D&I) can serve various organizational purposes. Primary, documentation provides a tangible reference point and offers potential tools for the association and its members.

When producing such essential documents, several considerations are crucial. Firstly, it is important to involve a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure broader representation and create legitimacy and support for the documents. The intended outcome is for the documents to be relatable to all the members of the organizations. Making the drafting process as inclusive as possible is therefore important. Secondly, it is vital to ensure that the documents are accessible and visible, for instance, by featuring them on the website of the organization.

When the reports are published and visible it reinforces the party's commitment towards achieving its goals of being more diverse and inclusive. Although D66 has these documents on the party's online portal, members have reported challenges in managing the portal, and the documents are occasionally perceived as overly theoretical.

3.2.2 Networks

To ensure good representation within the party, D66 created three formal networks. These serve as a core objective, creating a safe environment in which members with similar interests are stimulated to participate. All networks represent a diverse group and have an independent board. This means that while the networks are part of D66, the governance of these networks lies with the elected boards. To facilitate the purpose of the networks D66 yearly allocates a budget of a maximum of 2,500 Euros to the networks. With this budget, the networks are expected to organize activities. D66 in this way helps the networks stimulate cohesion and the sharing of knowledge among peers.

- Sense of belonging

The greatest benefit of the networks is that they create a sense of belonging among their members. In addition, they advocate for more representation within the party by providing people from their networks with a platform. Additionally, the networks occasionally serve as think tanks. They advise the national board and share knowledge and input on specific topics. However, it is important to note that they are excluded from taking a specific political stance. This means that networks cannot write motions or amendments. This is to ensure the impartiality of the networks and to protect them from being used as personal campaign vehicles for certain candidates.

- Diversity appropriation

The networks have been demonstrated to be of great benefit to D66. At the same time, certain challenges have been evidenced. Initially, the networks had tendencies of appropriating the themes of their network. While there is a passion in that it should be noted that one entity should not hold entitlement over a subject that is important to the entire party. In addition, as a result of such appropriations allies were alienated. Thankfully, more recently the networks have started moving forward from such practices and some have campaigned to include allies within their networks.

For example, the female network of D66 Els Borst Network (EBN) is active in many cities in the Netherlands. The network is not only open to members of D66 but also to other women who wish to see more female participation in politics. As the late Els Borst, who the network is named after said: 'Politics is too important to only be left with men'. (34)

34 - D66 (no date), 'Els Borst Netwerk',

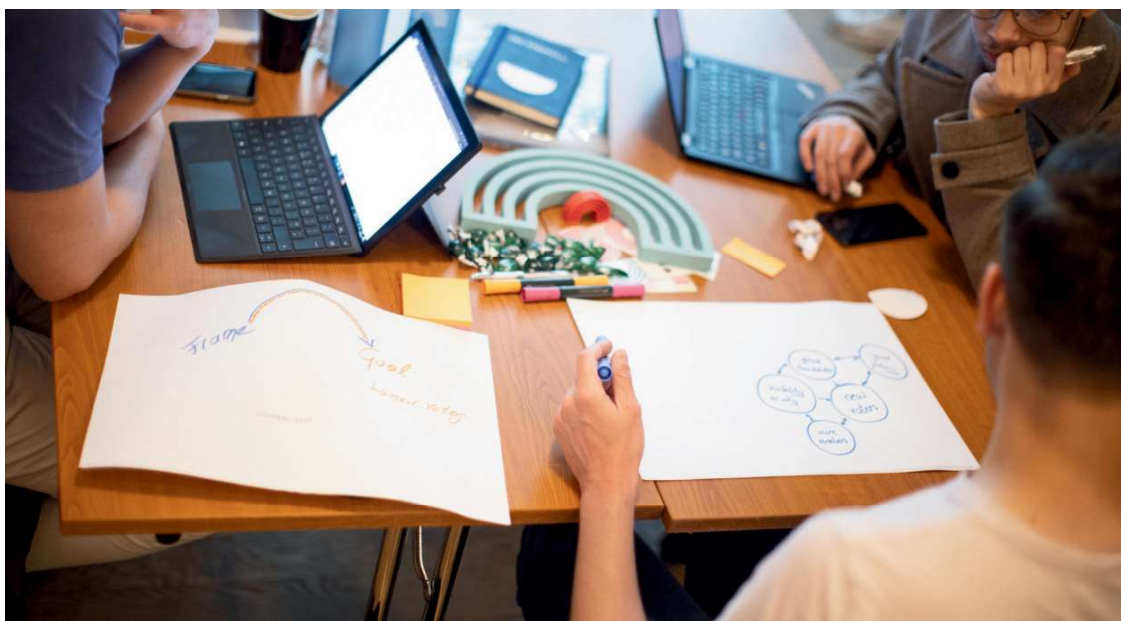
The network embodies this sentiment but also invites men to actively join them in their endeavors for a more gender-balanced political landscape in the Netherlands and within D66. Around 10% of the attendees at national events of the EBN are male. (35)

- Representation

The establishment of D66 networks was created to foster unity, create role models, and ensure more diversity in representation. To ensure visibility and to achieve the network's goals active participation is imperative. Accordingly, the organization has a role to play in ensuring the networks function as they should and are well-informed. Moreover, if the networks actively take the initiative to create a platform to foster dialogue, diversity, and inclusion can flourish within the political organization, resulting in the creation of role models, inclusive decision-making, and a sense of belonging. Conversely, if the networks are passive in their role, the party may lose some insightful contributions. The functioning of the networks and the flourishing of diversity and inclusion thus depend on the network's active participation as well as the organization's assistance.

- Appreciation

Networks are governed by volunteers, for that reason the organization should show appreciation for the work delivered by the networks. This is important to motivate the volunteers to keep up the good work. Showing appreciation should be done regardless of the size of the network. To inspire boards to be more active D66 should invest more in valuing volunteers' efforts. This goes beyond allocating a budget to a network to organize events. It includes investing time in appreciating the work of the board members. An example of doing this is to organize a yearly BBQ, dinner, or teambuilding activity with the boards of the networks. Such gatherings should also serve to re-iterate purposes, bond, share knowledge, best practices, and more.



35 - This percentage is given by the EBN event manager and secretary based on the 2023 EBN event.

3.2.3 Diversity officer and board member inclusion

In recommendation of D66's 'Final Statement', they hired a diversity officer in 2021. With this act, the organization wanted to show its dedication to becoming a more diverse and inclusive party. The ultimate and direct goal was to have a diverse party list for the 2026 national elections. The diversity officer thus was set to create a plan to coordinate diversity and inclusion initiatives within the party. As a result, the inclusion compass was written, and a series of awareness training, a diversity and inclusion event, and several masterclasses throughout the country were realized. D66 believed that awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion would lead to more understanding of the issue and inspire the different departments to promote diversity and inclusion.

By hiring a diversity officer D66 distinguished itself from other parties that advocate for diversity and inclusion, by going beyond words and delivering with action. With the diversity officer and the board member inclusion, diversity and inclusion were always on the D66 agenda. This ensured that there was a critical stance within the organization that would provide an internal check on the party and speak up if the diversity and inclusion commitments were not honored. In addition, D66 members had in the person of the diversity officer a contact person that they could reach out to regarding diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives and with questions.

The benefits of having a diversity officer are numerous. D66 outlines a few.

A diversity officer is ...

... a compass.

As has been emphasized before, diversity and inclusion are never-ending processes. It is thus important that an organization commits to these processes by creating a full-time position to ensure that the work is executed correctly. Moreover, having a diversity officer is also a show of commitment. It forces an organization to recognize its shortcomings and to improve or create diversity and inclusion policies. The diversity officer can be the guiding link to fostering an environment in which said policies are well received and executed. This can prevent feelings of apprehension within a diverse organization as well as the tokenism of the few diverse people in an organization.

... a permanent contact person

A diversity officer has the expertise to create and implement diversity and inclusion initiatives and to help departments improve their diversity strategies. For a political party, the national principles must be followed locally. A diversity officer serves as a link between diversity policies nationally and the implementation thereof locally by being the contact person and potential advisor to the departments. Having a diversity officer in that way provides the departments with a direct link to the diversity policies. This can help foster an understanding between the national organization and its several bodies.

... someone who keeps networks involved and informed

The crucial role of a diversity officer and the board member responsible for inclusion is the important task of maintaining good relations with a party's networks. These networks work on advocating D&I-related issues, hence it is important that they are at all times informed on the national stance on D&I. Especially because of the longevity and complexity of D&I, a diversity officer and a party can benefit from the assistance of networks. To ensure a mutually beneficial relationship, reciprocal information sharing is essential. This practice facilitates collaboration on specific initiatives, offering financial advantages and showcasing a collective commitment from both the networks and the party.

... constructive, critical and ensures D&I remains on the agenda

One of the most important tasks of a diversity officer and a board member dedicated to inclusion is that they ought to be critical and constructive to a party's commitment to becoming more inclusive and diverse. With these positions, it is impossible to not circumvent diversity and inclusion within the organization. It is a reiteration of commitment that can further the organization's goals.

... someone who provides training, organizes events, etc.

To change the perspective of a group of people and to raise awareness it is imperative to provide training, masterclasses, and workshops and to organize events. These acts help make the concepts of diversity and inclusion more visible and tangible to a party's members. It is impossible to expect people to follow something they do not understand. Diversity and inclusion are more than terms. To have it embedded within an organization's culture its importance needs to be felt, there must be a party-wide support base. Events and safe space meetings can foster an environment of connection and open-mindedness with correct guidance, which will help people understand the importance of D&I more. Diversity officers can organize such events while considering the sensitive aspects of D&I and ensuring the events are successful and respectful to all.

... someone who creates documents that provide tools to stimulate more D&I initiatives

While D&I initiatives should transcend theory, it is also important that the concepts are well understood. Moreover, political organizations' views on delicate matters must be consistent in all bodies. Diversity officers can write the organization's diversity and inclusion policies, share implementation strategies, provide tools to foster diversity and inclusion, and more. These documents can serve as a reference for everyone within the party. While D66 has experienced numerous benefits in having a diversity officer, it is important to note that there are also a few lessons to be learned. Firstly, executing diversity policies within a political organization is complex. Many departments, commissions, networks, and other bodies need to be considered. One person cannot easily manage all that. To facilitate such a task, an all-encompassing platform is necessary. On this platform, the party's D&I initiatives should be visible and accessible to everyone.

To illustrate, the diversity officer provides many trainings that can serve as an inspiration. Creating visibility through for instance a website or social media account could help different bodies manage diversity and inclusion better. The party's stance on D&I issues will become more visible to the bodies and members which will allow the organisation to speak in one voice on D&I-related matters.

Secondly, D&I indeed has a prominent role on the D66 agenda. However, this prominence is contrasted by a limitation in budget and as such in creativity. To illustrate the budget allocated to D&I specifically centres around the D&I and inclusion event. With this, there is little to no room for a diversity officer to organise D&I related events to further D66's agenda. With more budget, D&I could be made more visible and accessible to members. It is important for political organisations to provide a diversity officer with a space to be creative and to allocate enough budget to realise such creative ideas. With this, it is important to point out that the work of a diversity officer can challenge an organisation's existing cultures and rules. Therefore, before hiring a diversity officer a political organisation should have a level of open-mindedness that allows a space for creativity. On the other hand, it is important for the diversity officer to be creative within the confinements of the companies' views. Upon hiring there should be a clear indication of what is possible and what is not. Because of the complex political aspect of the liberal political organisation, D&I initiatives take more time to execute than in normal organisations. This should be acknowledged by management, political leaders as well diversity officers. Regardless, a political organisation must be aware of the responsibility it takes when hiring a diversity officer. Such an expert cannot be hindered in their work by political bureaucracy. The commitment to make a political organisation diverse and inclusive thus requires flexibility on different sides.

3.2.4 Engaging workshops, training and sessions

D66 takes a proactive approach by organising engaging workshops, online and in-person training, and enlightening sessions during its congresses. These initiatives revolve around the vital themes of diversity and inclusion and are championed by the board member responsible for inclusion.

Cultivating awareness and generating support

The primary objective is to cultivate awareness among all members. However, these events are more than just educational; they are transformative experiences. Often, participants leave a session with a resounding desire to take meaningful action. Therefore, the initiatives serve a dual purpose: creating awareness and generating support while motivating members to effect change.

Some important lessons can be learned from the training, workshops, and sessions from D66. Firstly, there is the crucial aspect of findability. A lot of the members of the association do not know that training and workshops are being provided, a searchable platform as mentioned above could be the solution. Effective communication plays a pivotal role in ensuring members are aware of the offerings.

Secondly, there is the challenge of expanding reach. D66 recognizes the difficulty of reaching those individuals who may not initially prioritize diversity and inclusion. Often, the same people attend the sessions during congress or workshops.

These are most often the people who are aware of the importance of the subject or belong to a marginalized group. However, the organization strives to reach those members who do not see the importance of inclusion or are unaware of these initiatives. D66 has not yet found the perfect solution to this challenge. In the end, participation is an individual's choice, and the party cannot impose participation on its members.

Nonetheless, there are some insights that can be used to overcome the challenge mentioned above. To stand amidst the myriad of sessions and training offered, it is imperative to ensure that diversity and inclusion initiatives stand out. Below are some noteworthy takeaways from D66 on how to achieve this:

- To actively promote sessions and create inciting introductions/invitations and emphasise the importance of participation.
- Make sure that the training or session is easy to find and is accessible to participate in.
- In the vibrant atmosphere of a congress, where there is a multitude of activities, don't wait for people to find their way to a session. Instead, take the session directly to them. For instance, ensure that the session is scheduled in a nearby room, or ideally, positioned around or even on the main stage. To illustrate during the pre-election congress the diversity officers made an inclusion gallery. This gallery was showcased in the middle of the Congress meeting hall. Everyone who attended the event was forced to pass by the gallery. People could look at the several initiatives that the party had organized in the past years, read some of the key documents, receive information on the online module and on how to reach the diversity officers. In addition, the members were asked to give input and leave a message at the gallery. This together with a picture of them that would be taken at the gallery will be hung. That way people who visit the gallery can read the messages, be inspired and encouraged to participate. This activity was simple to organize, but its impact was enormous. Many people commented that it was one of the most memorable things they had experienced at a D66 congress.
- Consider innovative and unconventional approaches to make the session truly unforgettable and distinguishable from the rest.
- Pay attention to the narrative. Oftentimes, there is a negative connotation when it comes to talking about diversity and inclusion. People feel they must defend themselves or think they are not allowed to get involved in the discussion, and therefore do not join a training or session. Ensure that everyone feels welcome and encouraged to join the initiatives. Establish an inclusive atmosphere where every voice is heard and respected, even before the training or session begins. In short, create a safe space.

IMPORTANT

Personally

- ASK & ENCOURAGE ppl TO STAND
- GOLDEN WINDOW
- HOW TO SELL THE BENEFITS OF D&I TO THOSE WHO TECHNICALLY DON'T WIN
- Individual approach
- Diversity Officer
- Finding the right moment to raise your concerns/ideas
- 18 MONTHS WINDOW
- Building a team
- HOW TO INFLUENCE
- Ask
- Allies + resources internally + external

Team

- ROLE MODEL EFFECT
- BE AWARE OF IMPLICIT BIAS
- MENTOR
- KEEP PEOPLE INTERESTED
- Acknowledgment of successes
- One-Trick-Pony ↳ Team should support you
- Thanks + appreciation
- Join a campaign team
- Look outside of your own party bubble

Just ...

Party

- ASK PEOPLE TO STAND !!! ...
- Setting KPIs & evaluating them
- Training
- Offline vs. Online-Meetings
- SYSTEMATIC SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR CANDIDATES
- REACHING OUT PERSONALLY
- Internal support network (GROWTH)
- Golden window of opportunity → activation
- VALIDATION RECOGNITION
- Mentoring + buddy system

It is important to monitor the impact of a training, workshop, or session. Do participants implement what they have learned? Does it lead to organizational shifts in perception? While monitoring these outcomes can be challenging, We consider the development of the tools that will be introduced as a result of this section as the starting point.

3.2.5 Yearly diversity & inclusion event and award

To emphasise the importance of diversity and inclusion within the organisation, D66 organises an annual diversity & inclusion (D&I) event. This yearly returning event serves as a beacon, highlighting the achievements and dedicating undivided attention to diversity and inclusion. In addition, besides celebrating the successes, the event enhances the visibility of diversity and inclusion's significance with D66. Moreover, it fosters a sense of unity, where members rally together to advance diversity and inclusion efforts, instilling a shared sense of ownership.

Celebrate successes and appreciate efforts

At every event, the annual D&I Award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion within or outside the D66 association. Members of D66 have the opportunity to nominate candidates. From the pool of nominees, a winner will be selected during the event. The objective of this award is twofold: to express gratitude and appreciation towards the nominees for their dedicated efforts and to serve as an incentive to continue to work for an association where differences are valued and optimally used.

Additionally, there are some important takeaways derived from D66's experience. The first insight is investing in the event. D66 stresses the importance of allocating resources for the event, ensuring an optimal venue, accessibility, securing knowledgeable speakers, and effectively promoting the event. The second insight is awarding excellence. It is crucial to ensure that the award you present holds a value. For D66 the award has a status within the organisation and therefore it is an honour to even be nominated for the award. The party also thinks about who will hand over the award and why and how the winner is chosen. By a jury or democratically? When opting for a jury, one should think about who is on the jury and why. One of the main advantages of a jury is that voting for a winner is considerably weighted and therefore based on the merits of a person as a result of their motivation and contribution. A democratically chosen winner amplifies a sense of community involvement and shared responsibility. The question that should be answered with this is how do you organise the voting? Whatever the choice of preference, it is important to involve the organisation's networks. This helps to enhance the ownership and commitment to these initiatives. Last, it is important to really commit to the annual reciprocity of the event and the presentation of the award.

The network embodies this sentiment but also invites men to actively join them in their endeavors for a more gender-balanced political landscape in the Netherlands and within D66. Around 10% of the attendees at national events of the EBN are male. (35)

- Representation

The establishment of D66 networks was created to foster unity, create role models, and ensure more diversity in representation. To ensure visibility and to achieve the network's goals active participation is imperative. Accordingly, the organization has a role to play in ensuring the networks function as they should and are well-informed. Moreover, if the networks actively take the initiative to create a platform to foster dialogue, diversity, and inclusion can flourish within the political organization, resulting in the creation of role models, inclusive decision-making, and a sense of belonging. Conversely, if the networks are passive in their role, the party may lose some insightful contributions. The functioning of the networks and the flourishing of diversity and inclusion thus depend on the network's active participation as well as the organization's assistance.

- Appreciation

Networks are governed by volunteers, for that reason the organization should show appreciation for the work delivered by the networks. This is important to motivate the volunteers to keep up the good work. Showing appreciation should be done regardless of the size of the network. To inspire boards to be more active D66 should invest more in valuing volunteers' efforts. This goes beyond allocating a budget to a network to organize events. It includes investing time in appreciating the work of the board members. An example of doing this is to organize a yearly BBQ, dinner, or teambuilding activity with the boards of the networks. Such gatherings should also serve to re-iterate purposes, bond, share knowledge, best practices, and more.

3.3. Seeing diversity and inclusion as a process

D&I is a process that requires flexibility and continuous development. Organisations need to be aware of the changing societal advancements and find ways to adapt to them to make their organisation as inclusive as possible. For this reason, D66 invests in creating new initiatives that help its members be and feel more included. A new initiative that is currently being developed is the creation of a mentor programme.

3.3.1 Mentorship programme

The D66 documents on D&I all stipulate the importance of a mentor programme to make participation in the party more accessible.

As a result, D66 is currently creating a pilot mentor programme. The aim of this programme is to facilitate political participation for all, by diminishing the thresholds to participate and preparing aspirant politicians with personal guidance. Moreover, D66 hopes that this programme will inspire people who are talented but would previously have difficulty raising their hand as a result of limited knowledge, or because they pertain to a marginalised group to participate. Because of this, the mentor programme will be open to all members. This is different from other programmes in the sense that the requirements to participate are minimal, while the results are expected to be optimal. If the pilot is successful, D66 will have a durable programme that will become a network of inspired and empowered individuals who can help each other and campaign for the party. With this, the party can create a sense of belonging among the participants of the programme within the party.

The mentor programme is set to launch at the end of 2023, or the beginning of 2024. For now, only speculations can be made about its success. However, there is an abundance of research to back up the benefits of a mentor programme. The lesson that can be derived from such a programme for a political party, remains to be seen.

Additional observations and the importance of having a tool to measure the perception of diversity & and inclusion initiatives

Over the past years, literature has argued for the importance of creating diverse and inclusive work environments. This publication in particular advocates for the promotion of inclusion initiatives within liberal political organisations. The case of D66 serves as an example of what political organisations can do to tackle the issue of diversity and inclusion and outlines the challenges that can be encountered on the path to inclusion. The initiatives outlined in this publication cover the different layers of the political organisation. When looking at the first layer it can be concluded that D66 especially in the 2021 elections was successful in presenting a party list that was representative of its member base as well as Dutch society. To illustrate, the party put forward the first transgender woman and together with the Greens the first woman with a hijab in parliament. Moreover, D66 delivered for the first time in 100 years a Black minister for the Netherlands. A woman was at the helm of D66 and people all over the country saw themselves represented by the D66 party list. Consequently, many people who traditionally did not vote for the party voted for D66. Causing it to obtain a legendary win of 24 seats in parliament and 6 ministers and secretaries of state.

The second layer shows that D66 has a somewhat diverse member base. In the urban cities, all types of diversity are represented. This is not the same for smaller cities or villages. The implication this has is most visible when creating a party list. There are certain groups within society, notably people of colour that are less represented in the party's member base. As a result, D66 does not have a great pool of candidates to choose from when proposing a party list. In addition, it is more challenging for people from minority groups to run for office. This causes a dilemma.



THEY STRIVE TO ENSURE THAT INCLUSIVE MEASURES ARE ALWAYS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN ORGANIZING EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.

On the one hand, the party would like to propose a list that is diverse in every way, but on the other hand, it is limited by the small number of people from minority groups that apply to run for office. This dilemma can partially be solved by having networks invest more in creating role models and stimulating their members to participate more actively and by having the scout teams invest more in understanding the needs and challenges faced by minority groups. Another obstacle is investing more in ensuring the members understand the importance of diversity, inclusion, and representation. History has shown that members voting for the definitive party list, often vote for people they know or for those who look like them. As a result, newcomers, whether they belong to a minority group or not, are unfavoured. In this sense even when the party proposes a diverse party list with a special focus on all dimensions of diversity, the members can shuffle that list resulting in less diversity in electable positions on the list.

The diversity on D66's 2021 party list can be attributed to the political organization of the party. The leadership valued diversity and inclusion starting with the political leader to the diverse committees that were created to propose the advice party list. The employees in the D66 National Office hail from all walks of Dutch society and understand the importance of diversity and inclusion. As a result, they strive to ensure that inclusive measures are always taken into account when organizing events and other activities. For instance, from event locations for a congress to the website, and from international meetings to the committees that are formed, accessibility and inclusion are consistently considered. In addition, the committees that are formed to vet the candidates who apply to run for office are selected with great care based on their qualities and background. Moreover, these committees are always provided with various training including unconscious bias training. As shown in the case study, D66 also provides training for its members. Unfortunately, many members are not aware of these services. The challenge remains for D66 to find ways to bring this to the attention of its members. That will help in raising awareness and stimulating the conversation on the importance of diversity and inclusion.

With the case of D66, this section proposes a multitude of initiatives that can be taken to promote diversity and inclusion within a political organization. It must be underscored that these propositions are made from a position of privilege. To emphasize D66 holds 24 seats in Parliament, it has multiple ministers, more than 30.000 members in 2021, and around 40 employees at its National Office. Because of this D66 is a political giant in the Netherlands. This comes with many financial benefits. It thus stands to reason that the organization can afford to invest in diversity and inclusion initiatives. The same can not be said for smaller political organizations, in the Netherlands or elsewhere. This publication advocates for allocating more budget to inclusion initiatives, however, that is not equally feasible for all political organizations.



Nonetheless, the issue of diversity and inclusion should never be dependent on the financial success of a political organization. Especially, because this success is not a guarantee for a political organization. Therefore, political organizations regardless of size should strive to integrate diversity and inclusion within the organization's structure. This would mean having diversity and inclusion embedded into the organization's DNA in such a way that even in times of political distress the organization is inclusive.

To illustrate, political organizations have departments that create course modules & training, organize events, and coordinate campaigns. When diversity and inclusion are embedded in the structure of the organization this would translate into course modules including diversity and inclusion lessons, a prominent spot for a D&I-related activity at a congress, etc. The budget allocated is in this way not specifically dedicated to D&I but rather it is integrated into all departments of the organization. It thus forms part of the whole. The budget allocated to those departments is thus in a way allocated to diversity and inclusion. This results in the ultimate goal which is being an inclusive liberal organisation.

To sum up, the case study of this publication has shown that D66 has invested in many inclusion initiatives. A lot has been done and it can even be argued that D66 has achieved much on its journey to inclusion. It is interesting, however, that the challenge the organization encounters is contradictory in the sense that despite all its efforts it cannot with certitude assert which of the initiatives it has undertaken specifically work. This is because the matter of inclusion in contrast to diversity, is not easily measured. But also, because most people that attend for instance workshops and other initiatives remain the same and generally people from a minority group. Therefore, it is important that the organization has a tool to measure the perception of inclusion among its members. Essentially this tool would help D66 invest in sustainable diversity and inclusion initiatives by proposing those initiatives that are proven to work. As a result, this could lead to more understanding and thus legitimacy for more investment in those inclusion initiatives.

2023 Dutch parliamentary elections and its consequences for representative parties

The Dutch political landscape has changed while writing this publication. On the 22nd of November 2023, the Dutch parliamentary elections took place. The Dutch liberal parties VVD and D66, both part of the former government, significantly lost these elections. At the same time, the extreme right-wing party PVV emerged victorious. The historic win of the PVV has implications for both liberal parties. For D66 specifically, this means less visible diversity in parliament. (36) To explain, D66 has lost 15 seats in comparison to the 2021 election. The new fraction consists of five men and four women. The party leader is a member of the LGBTQI+ community and currently, there is solely one person of color. Whether the latter will maintain a seat in parliament will be determined after all votes are counted. (This will become evident after this publication is available to the public).

36 - 8% of the new parliament has a migration background, compared to 16% in 2021. The male-female ratio has somewhat remained similar. It is not clear how many members of parliament are part of the LGBTQI+ community, though the authors of this paper estimate it to be less than in 2021. In terms of education level 67% of the new parliament has enjoyed an academic education and 17% higher education. In 2021 this was 77% and 16%. Interestingly however, is that from 8% of the new parliament it is not known what education they have enjoyed. It could be that there is not a significant difference in education level compared to 2021.

In addition, all representatives have enjoyed an academic/theoretical education and are all above the age of 36. To clarify this does not entail that these people are not diverse, in fact, they are all individuals who bring unique experiences and characteristics to the table. However, these developments are important when taking into consideration the steps D66 has taken in the past years to be a more diverse and representative party and the difference one election can make. While at the start of this paper, D66 was among the privileged parties with enough funding to invest in diversity and inclusion initiatives, it now has a different stance. It will be more fundamental and challenging for this party to maintain its commitment to diversity and inclusion despite these new developments. This confirms our earlier point on the importance of having diversity and inclusion embedded into the organization's DNA in such a way that even in times of political distress the organization is inclusive.

4. CONCLUSION

In recent years, civil rights movements have shed light on the workplace's shortcomings in diversity and inclusion. Organizations globally have focused on gender diversity, spurred by initiatives like the #MeToo movement advocating for safe environments for women and promoting gender inclusion. The trans movement has challenged binary gender norms, emphasizing the importance of allowing individuals to identify freely at work, while the LGBTQI+ movement continues to advocate for acceptance and visibility. Additionally, after George Floyd's death in 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement prompted organizations in the United States and Europe to commit to addressing institutional racism and promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity. Also, liberal political organizations must strive to be diverse and inclusive, primarily because of their leading role in societies.

This article was written with the purpose of understanding the benefits of being an inclusive liberal political organization. Inclusivity in political organizations generates more inclusive decision and policy-making, societal unity, and adaptability. Representation in the form of diverse political role models inspires underrepresented groups to engage politically and give a sense of belonging to these groups, expanding support for these political entities. The Dutch social liberal party D66 is among a handful of liberal parties in Europe that has established great emphasis on diversity and inclusion. The party has a board member inclusion, a diversity officer, and several diversity and inclusion-related policies. Hence this party provided for an opportune case study for this article. The benefits as well as the lessons encountered by D66 on its path to inclusion serve as a noteworthy observation for others in becoming an inclusive liberal political organisation.

In recent years D66 has significantly invested in diversity and inclusion initiatives. The party established documents to create understanding and agency on the importance of D&I for its members. These documents served as a guideline and helped the organisation reiterate its commitments while providing members with a theoretical tool to approach D&I. D66 also regularly organises events and provides training and masterclasses to its members and departments. With this training, D66 raises awareness and equips departments with tools to develop their personal D&I initiatives. Moreover, with its yearly event D66 celebrates its achievements in diversity and inclusion, reflects on the past and looks forward to the improvements that can be achieved. During this event, the party awards its inclusion award to inspire members to participate more. Next to this, the party created three networks whose primary role is to advocate for more diversity within the party. The organisation occasionally emphasises the importance of collaboration between the networks and facilitates such collaboration. To assist the networks in achieving their goals the organisation allocates a budget. These networks advocate for diversity issues and have contributed to creating a sense of belonging among their members. Because diversity and inclusion remain an ongoing process, D66 continues to develop its initiatives and adapts to the needs of its members. Hence the party is currently developing a new initiative in the form of a mentor programme. This programme aims at lowering the participation threshold and equipping ambitious members with the network and means necessary to be successful in politics. The mentor programme is the result of a collective desire that became apparent in the D66 final statement and inclusion compass.

With all these initiatives D66 has experienced great benefits. It has demonstrated the will to not merely talk about inclusion but also to act. While much has been done by the party, a few challenges have, however, been evidenced. While minor in comparison to the benefits, it is important for the party to understand that the commitment to becoming more inclusive requires the party to allocate more budget to diversity and inclusion initiatives. The party underscores this department. In addition, the visibility of the work achieved by the party is nihil. As a result, members and departments have difficulty finding existing documents or reaching the diversity officer. This does not inspire much action from members. This may be one of the many reasons why diversity and inclusion training is not very popular. Having a website could solve this problem and could also help create more prominence for the inclusion award.

In conclusion, D66's commitment to diversity and inclusion is commendable. Much has been done and many initiatives are still in the development process. However, it is critical to note that despite all its efforts the party has not been able to properly measure the party-wide perception of its inclusion initiatives. To what extent do members feel included? Do the different initiatives help to establish this feeling of inclusion? Among others, these questions remain unanswered. It is therefore imperative for D66 that a tool to effectively measure the perception of inclusion within the organisation is created. This tool can then, if necessary, help the organisation effectively adapt its initiatives. This will allow D66 and other liberal political organisations to foster a truly diverse and inclusive political organisation. ●



EMPOWERING DEMOCRACY: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTY NETWORKS IN MAXIMISING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF MINORITIES

BY MARGUERITE O'LOUGHLIN

1. INTRODUCTION

In a diverse and dynamic society, the principles of equal representation and active participation for all segments of the population in the political process are not just ideals but fundamental to the essence of a thriving democracy. A democracy, by its very nature, seeks to embrace the voices, perspectives, and aspirations of all its citizens. Yet, in many societies, historical disparities, systemic barriers, and discriminatory practices have persisted, leading to a lack of equity in political engagement. In this context, the existence and effectiveness of political party minority networks emerge as a pivotal force, acting as powerful instruments of change and empowerment. In the Fianna Fáil party in Ireland, there are four such networks, a Women's Network, an LGBTQI+ Network, a Migrants' Network, and a Disability Network.

These networks function as critical bridges between marginalised communities and the political sphere. They play a multifaceted role in the pursuit of a more just and inclusive democracy. Beyond being instruments of empowerment, they serve as catalysts for greater inclusivity, policy responsiveness, and sustainable democratic growth. Their work reverberates not just through Fianna Fáil, but through the entire political landscape in Ireland, fostering a more equitable society where minority voices are not only heard but also actively engaged in shaping the future of their nation.

Addressing historical disparities:

The historical context in many societies is marked by a legacy of discrimination, exclusion, and marginalisation faced by minority communities. Whether rooted in race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other identifiers, these disparities have persisted over generations, shaping the socio-political landscape. In Ireland for example, homosexuality was only decriminalised in 1993, by a Fianna Fáil Minister for Justice Máire Geoghegan-Quinn. Minority networks within political parties play an essential role in acknowledging and addressing these historical disparities.

By recognising the unique challenges and experiences of minority groups, these networks contribute to levelling the playing field in the political arena. They serve as advocates for justice, demanding redress for past wrongs and pushing for reforms that rectify systemic inequalities. In doing so, they demonstrate their commitment to a more just future in addition to acknowledging historical injustices.

Empowerment through representation:

Empowerment is a central theme in the work of political party minority networks and by giving people from minority backgrounds a platform to participate in politics, these networks actively seek to empower them. By doing so, they assist individuals in overcoming the barriers that have historically hindered their participation and influence within politics.

Representation within political parties is one of the key pathways to empowerment. These networks advocate for the diversification of party leadership, candidate selection, and policy formulation. By pushing for greater representation that mirrors the broader population, political party minority networks ensure that minority voices are not relegated to the periphery but are integral to the core of the political decision-making process.

Empowerment through representation extends beyond just symbolic inclusion; it transforms into tangible opportunities for individuals from minority communities to advocate for policies that address the unique needs and challenges they face. This empowerment fosters a sense of agency and ownership over the political process, allowing individuals to actively participate in shaping their political destiny.

Catalysts for inclusivity:

The foundation of any thriving democracy is inclusivity. A truly inclusive democracy seeks to create an environment where every citizen feels that their voice matters, that their concerns are heard, and that their interests are considered in the formation of policies and laws. Political party minority networks act as catalysts for greater inclusivity within the political landscape.

These networks push political parties and institutions to recognise and value the diversity of their constituents. For them, inclusivity is not a mere buzzword but a guiding principle. By advocating for policies and practices that reflect the diversity of the population, they challenge the status quo and promote a political environment where the voices of minority communities are actively sought and integrated.

Moreover, the work of political party minority networks extends beyond the party structures. They advocate for inclusivity in various aspects of public life, from employment to education to representation in government agencies. This holistic approach to inclusivity contributes to a more equitable and just society where all individuals, regardless of their background, have a fair chance to thrive and succeed. The Fianna Fáil Women's Network has made pre-budget submissions to the Minister for Finance in Ireland, gender-proofing the party's policies, and ensuring that the voice of women is not forgotten.

Policy responsiveness:

One of the most important components of a functioning democracy is policy responsiveness. Policies should be reflective of the needs and aspirations of the entire population. However, without active advocacy, minority concerns can be overlooked or marginalised in policy formulation. Political party minority networks fill this gap by actively engaging in the policy-making process.



These networks advocate for policies that address the specific challenges, inequalities, and injustices faced by minority communities. Whether it's advocating for educational reforms, healthcare access, criminal justice reforms, or civil rights protections, they work to ensure that these issues are not overlooked in the policy agenda. Their advocacy results in policies that promote equity, fairness, and justice. These policies not only benefit minority populations but also contribute to a more comprehensive and responsive policy platform for the political party as a whole ensuring that the party is more representative and reflective of its society. By advocating for policies that address the concerns of minority communities, political party minority networks foster a more just and inclusive society.

Sustainable democratic growth:

The long-term health and sustainability of any democracy depend on the active participation of its citizens. Political party minority networks play a crucial role in fostering sustainable democratic growth. Through their work, members of minority communities are given the tools they need to become active and informed participants in the political process. Through targeted outreach, community organising, educational initiatives, and grassroots mobilisation, these networks equip individuals with the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to engage meaningfully in politics. This engagement goes beyond the act of voting; it extends to advocacy, community organising, and even running for political office. By cultivating a sense of civic duty and encouraging informed participation, political party minority networks contribute to a more vibrant and robust democracy. The sustainability of democratic growth is not solely measured by the number of individuals who cast their ballots but also by the depth of their engagement and their capacity to influence political outcomes.

2. ACKNOWLEDGING HISTORICAL DISPARITIES

Minority communities have often faced historical discrimination, marginalisation, and disenfranchisement. The creation of political party minority networks acknowledges these past injustices and signals a commitment to redressing them. By recognising the unique needs and perspectives of minority groups, these networks work towards a more equitable and just political landscape. The creation of the networks within Fianna Fáil has happened organically over the years whereby some party members from a minority group came together where they saw a need for change, a gap in policy, or a common feeling of a need for representation.

Historical disparities, discrimination, and systemic inequalities have been enduring challenges that minority communities have grappled with for generations.

These communities have often faced marginalisation, disenfranchisement, and various forms of injustice that have hindered their full participation in the political process. The creation and effective operation of political party minority networks represent a significant step forward in acknowledging these historical injustices and signaling a commitment to redressing them.

2.1. Historical context

To understand the profound impact of political party minority networks, it's essential to delve into the historical context that has shaped the experiences of minority communities. Throughout history, societies around the world have grappled with deep-rooted prejudices, biases, and structural inequalities that have prevented marginalised groups from exercising their full rights and participating equally in civic life. Whether it was racial or sexual discrimination, religious persecution, or social exclusion, minority communities have borne the brunt of these injustices.



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These historical disparities manifested themselves in various forms, from the denial of voting rights to the exclusion from political decision-making processes. Minority communities often faced insurmountable obstacles, including discriminatory laws, restrictive voting requirements, and gerrymandering, which were designed to dilute their political influence. These injustices not only undermined the principles of equality and justice but also hindered the social and economic progress of these communities.

2.2. The role of political party minority networks

Arising in response to these historical injustices, political party minority networks emerge representing a deliberate effort to recognise the unique challenges and perspectives of minority groups within the political landscape. These networks operate within political parties with a clear mandate: to increase the representation and participation of minority communities in the democratic process.

One of their core functions is to act as advocates for minority communities within their respective political parties. They ensure that the concerns and interests of these groups are given due consideration when shaping party platforms, policies, and agendas. By providing a platform for minority voices, these networks work to bridge the gap between party leadership and the lived experiences of minority communities.

As mentioned previously, in the Fianna Fáil party in Ireland, four minority networks are doing just that. The Women's Network, the LGBTQI+ Network, The Disability Network and the Migrants' Network. The party has a full-time Women's and Equality Officer working in party HQ who assists and facilitates the networks in their day-to-day activities, events and campaigns.

Each of the networks has an executive, or officer board, that drives the work of the network. The officers are elected and are as follows:

- President
- Secretary
- Membership and Recruitment Officer
- Social Media Officer
- Policy and Campaigns Officer
- Events Officer

Fianna Fáil Women's Network

The Fianna Fáil Women's Network campaigns for gender equality and the promotion of women's rights at a national level. All women members of the Party are automatically members of the Women's Network. The Network has its own Officer Board which is elected by full voting members of the Network. The role of the Officer Board is to guide the work of the Network, influence Party policy, and promote the involvement of women within the overall organisation.

The main aims of the network are to:

- Promote gender equality
- Support women in politics
- Create a more equal Ireland.

They organise networking events nationally and regionally and specific annual events for International Women's Day in March every year. They provide training and development for aspirant and selected female candidates and area representatives. They also network with external organisations aimed at securing greater female participation in political life.



Last but by no means least, they encourage women to put themselves forward for leadership positions within the general party organisation and selection as area representatives and election candidates.

The Fianna Fáil LGBTQI+ Network

Fianna Fáil has a long and proud history of campaigning for LGBTQI+ rights. From the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993 by then Justice Minister Máire Geoghegan-Quinn to the delivery of Civil Partnerships in 2010, Fianna Fáil has fought both to defend and extend the rights of LGBTQI+ people for over 30 years. The Fianna Fáil LGBTQI+ Network aims to ensure the party supports and acts in favour of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people; and to encourage members of this community to join and support Fianna Fáil. The Network was formed by a group of members keen to make connections, advocate for reform, propose new and innovative policy ideas, and ensure that Fianna Fáil is welcoming to and representative of the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland. The LGBTQI+ network exists to strengthen the party's commitment and action on LGBTQI+ issues from the inside and to give Ireland the government it deserves to ensure that the country works for the many, not just the few.

They host regular meetings and are an active campaigning section within the Party and have been supported and assisted by several Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) members since their formation.

Fianna Fáil Disability Network

The Fianna Fáil Disability Network actively campaigns for equal rights for people with disabilities. The network was founded by party members Sinéad Lucey Brennan, Dion Davis, and Tory McGlynn. The network is made up of like-minded members to bridge the gap between disability policies, resources, and facilities across multiple areas in society – transport, social protection, education, employment, housing, and health – that are not currently in place for persons with disabilities. Fianna Fáil was the first party to prioritise disability policies and legislation to promote the rights of disabled people in Irish society which aligns with its democratic republican values of fostering equality and inclusion in everyday life.

The main aims of the network are:

- Education & awareness: Recognising and understanding the ongoing challenges for people living with physical, intellectual, and invisible disabilities and their families locally and nationally.
- Promote member engagement: Establishing an open and shared forum to collaborate on ideas and suggestions by engaging existing members to hear their voices and hear both lived experiences and fresh thinking on the future of disability.
- Equity for disabled people: Leveraging the current disability and equality policies and practices and working to formulate further disability and equality policy, recognising disability and equality as core tenets of republican values and ensuring equity through promoting equal access to policy-making, events, campaigns, and leadership opportunities.

Fianna Fáil Migrants' Network

Fianna Fáil is a diverse and vibrant party that is representative of all society. The Fianna Fáil Migrants' Network was established to encourage members of the party from a migrant background to get more involved in meetings and events and formulate policy on issues of importance to them. There are many migrant members in the party across Ireland and this is an additional forum for them within the party, to network and participate.

Unfortunately, the reality is that migrants often find themselves marginalised from public discourse on issues of integration and diversity. There are many barriers to migrants becoming involved in politics, particularly in rural areas. This is something that must be addressed, and the Migrants' Network is a great opportunity to tackle and discuss such issues head-on. It encourages members from a migrant background to use their voice, get involved, and formulate policy.

Empowering marginalised communities:

In order to truly empower minority communities, political party minority networks are essential and a transformative aspect of their work. By actively involving individuals from historically marginalised backgrounds in the political process, these networks instill a sense of belonging and agency among these communities. When people from minority backgrounds see themselves represented within a political party and witness policies aimed at addressing their specific needs, it fosters a sense of empowerment.

Empowerment goes beyond the individual level. It strengthens communities and encourages more individuals from these backgrounds to engage with politics. This empowerment can manifest in various forms, from increased voter turnout to greater participation in grassroots activism and even encouraging individuals to run for political office themselves. Fianna Fáil currently has three migrant Councillors (members of regional Government), Cllr. Uruemu Adejinmi, Longford County Council, Cllr. JK Onwumereh, Fingal County Council and Cllr. Abul Kalam Azad Talukder, Limerick City and County Council. The party has also appointed Local Area Representatives from migrant backgrounds who will run for local election in June 2024. The Migrants' Network fosters and encourages members to put themselves forward for leadership positions within the party organisation, to run for election, and to get elected.

2.3. Enhancing equity and justice:

Beyond empowerment, the existence of the networks signals a commitment to promoting equity and justice within the political landscape. They demonstrate that political parties are actively seeking to address historical disparities and rectify systemic injustices. This commitment extends beyond the party's internal dynamics; it sends a powerful message to the broader society about the values of inclusivity and fairness.

Moreover, these networks often champion policies that specifically target the issues faced by minority communities. Whether it's addressing disparities in education, healthcare, criminal justice, or economic opportunities, the advocacy of these networks results in policies that are more comprehensive and equitable. This not only benefits minority communities but also contributes to a fairer and more just society overall.

3. BUILDING INCLUSIVITY AND REPRESENTATION

Building inclusion and representation within political parties—and consequently, the democratic system as a whole—is largely dependent on political party minority networks. These networks serve as vital platforms for the voices of marginalised and underrepresented communities to be heard, recognised, and integrated into the core of party structures. Their contributions extend to diversifying party leadership, influencing candidate selection, and shaping policy formulation, all of which collectively contribute to creating a more reflective and responsive political environment.

3.1. Diversifying party leadership

One of the key ways in which political party minority networks foster inclusivity is by contributing to the diversification of party leadership. Historically, party leadership positions have often been dominated by individuals from majority backgrounds, which can lead to a lack of perspective on the unique challenges faced by minority communities. However, with the establishment of these networks, there is a deliberate effort to ensure that leadership positions within the party reflect the diversity of the party's membership and the broader population.

As a result, individuals from minority backgrounds are increasingly being elevated to leadership roles within political parties. This not only provides a platform for these leaders to advocate for policies that address the needs of their communities but also sets an example for other political parties and institutions to follow. The presence of diverse leadership fosters an environment where different perspectives and experiences are valued and considered when making critical decisions.

Influencing candidate selection:

The process of selecting candidates is also influenced by political party minority networks. In many democratic systems, candidates are chosen by political parties to represent them in elections. These networks actively work to ensure that candidates who understand and are committed to addressing the concerns of minority communities are given a fair chance in the selection process.

This influence extends beyond merely advocating for candidates from minority backgrounds; it also includes ensuring that party platforms and policies align with the needs and aspirations of these communities. As a result, political parties with strong minority networks are more likely to put forward candidates who are not only representative of the broader population but also attuned to the specific issues faced by minority groups.

In 2022 Fianna Fáil conducted a recruitment campaign targeted at Women. Members of the Women's Network, including women from the Disability, LGBTQI+, and Migrant's Network, shot a video speaking about why they joined Fianna Fáil and what motivated them to get involved in politics. They spoke about how rewarding the work had been, about the lifelong friendships they had formed, and about the differences they had made for their communities. In the video, they appealed to other women to get involved in the party and politics, to make a difference in their communities. The video was released on social media and became very successful. In the end, it resulted in over 200 women joining the party as new members, many of whom are very active members of the Women's Network today and will hopefully run for election in the future.



3.2. Shaping policy formulation

Another critical function of political party minority networks is their role in shaping policy formulation. These networks advocate for policies that address the unique challenges, inequalities, and injustices faced by minority communities. By actively participating in the policy-making process within the party, they ensure that these issues are not overlooked or marginalized in the party's agenda.

These policies often encompass a wide range of areas, including education, healthcare, employment, criminal justice, and civil rights. By advocating for policies that promote equity and fairness, political party minority networks contribute to the development of a more comprehensive and responsive policy platform. This, in turn, attracts a more diverse and inclusive voter base, strengthening the party's electoral prospects.

3.3. Examples of networks in action

In Fianna Fáil, the minority networks have increasingly become an integral part of the mainstream activities of the party. They are actively involved in communications, both online and offline, ensuring that the concerns and perspectives of minority communities are consistently represented. This involvement extends to webinars, stands at party events, individual pages on the party website and online meetings, where members of these networks share their experiences and insights.

For example, the Disability Network have organised webinars and panel discussions with the Irish Wheelchair Association, where they discussed pressing issues and policy proposals. The Women's Network has had Zoom meetings with Women for Election, and meetings with Women's Aid and the Migrants' Network have had meetings with the Immigrant Council of Ireland. These events provide a platform for informed and constructive dialogue, promoting a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by minority groups and the solutions that can be implemented.

In the weekly online Fianna Fáil party bulletin that is emailed to members, the minority networks have a specific section of the bulletin called 'Your Networks'. Here the Network Officers can post updates and news, information about upcoming events and photographs of recent activities.

Moreover, the networks play a crucial role in leveraging social media and online platforms to reach a broader audience. They use these channels to share information, engage with supporters, and advocate for their policy priorities. In doing so, they ensure that the voices of minority communities are not confined to the margins but are central to the party's communication strategy.

4. AMPLIFYING POLICY CONCERNS

Minority group networks are well-positioned to identify and amplify policy concerns that are often overlooked or underrepresented. By centring on issues relevant to minority communities, these groups bridge gaps in political discourse and ensure a more comprehensive policy agenda. This, in turn, leads to policies that better address the needs of all citizens, promoting social cohesion and stability.

Political party minority networks serve as powerful platforms for identifying, amplifying, and addressing policy concerns that have historically been overlooked or underrepresented in the political landscape. By focusing on issues that directly impact minority communities, these networks play a vital role in bridging gaps in political discourse and ensuring a more inclusive and comprehensive policy agenda. This proactive approach leads to the development of policies that better address the diverse needs of all citizens, ultimately promoting social cohesion and stability within the democratic system.

4.1. Identifying unique policy concerns

One of the primary functions of political party minority networks is to identify and elevate policy concerns that are specific to minority communities. These networks consist of individuals who have a deep understanding of the challenges and disparities faced by their respective communities. They are well-positioned to recognise the intricacies of these issues and advocate for policies that can alleviate them effectively.

For example, these networks may focus on issues such as racial and ethnic disparities in education, healthcare access, or criminal justice. They may also address concerns related to religious freedom, immigration, and discrimination. By actively engaging with these topics, political party minority networks ensure that policies are developed with a keen awareness of the unique circumstances and experiences of minority groups.

In July 2022, Senator Lisa Chambers launched the first Women's Healthcare Policy for Fianna Fáil. There hadn't been a healthcare policy specific to women before that in Fianna Fáil. Senator Chambers undertook a lengthy consultation process over 9 months, hearing from experts, practitioners, and the lived experience of women across the country including the members of the Fianna Fáil Women's Network. Many women said that they did not feel listened to or taken seriously when it came to their healthcare. This experience was often exacerbated for those coming from a migrant or Traveller background, women with a disability, or older women. While cost and availability were also often major barrier for women. The policy, which the Women's Network played a key role in developing with Senator Chambers, focuses on key health issues that affect women throughout their life course. From gynecological and menstrual health to pregnancy, reproductive health, mental health, fertility, and surrogacy to menopause supports.

4.2. Amplifying underrepresented voices

In addition to identifying policy concerns, these networks amplify the voices of underrepresented communities in the political process. Historically, minority communities have faced challenges in having their concerns adequately heard and addressed. Political party minority networks provide a mechanism through which these voices can gain prominence and influence policy decisions.

In June 2023, The Fianna Fáil Disability Network launched its disability discussion document entitled 'The Future of Disability Connectivity, Visibility, Recognition & Access for All, 2023 & Beyond'. This discussion document showed how bringing together the voices and ideas of the network members, advocates, disability service providers, and organisations supporting furthering disability policy, was a worthwhile exercise that can lead to new, diverse, and innovative policy ideas. The President of the Network, Sinead Lucey Brennan vowed to ensure that the document and its recommendations become an ever-evolving sphere of influence that generates ideas to inform future disability policy for Fianna Fáil. She said that it was a living document and that she looked forward to continuing to hear people's lived experiences in every part of Ireland to continue this work.

As with the previous example, networks should actively engage with their communities, conducting outreach, surveys, and consultations to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of minority individuals are accurately represented. They serve as a conduit for bringing these voices to the forefront of political discussions and debates. This not only empowers individuals from minority backgrounds but also enriches the policy discourse with diverse viewpoints.

4.3. Bridging gaps in political discourse

The existence of political party minority networks is essential for bridging gaps in political discourse. All too often, certain policy concerns, particularly those affecting minority communities, can be marginalised or overlooked in mainstream political discussions. These networks actively challenge this status quo by consistently advocating for their priorities and ensuring that they are part of the broader policy conversation. By shining a spotlight on underrepresented issues, political party minority networks compel political parties and institutions to address these concerns as essential components of their policy agendas. This dynamic contributes to a more robust and comprehensive policy landscape, where a broader spectrum of issues is taken into account when shaping government initiatives and legislative actions.

In Fianna Fáil, each of the networks has a Parliamentary Party (PP) liaison. This is a member of the parliamentary party, so an elected TD (MP) or Senator is appointed to be a liaison between the network and the party's elected members of parliament. This PP liaison works with the network officer board to develop policy, advise and assist with their events and campaigns, and keep the parliamentary party up to date on their work. The liaison is a very important bridge that keeps the network connected to the highest levels of the party and also gives the network recognition and appreciation for all of the work that they are doing in a voluntary capacity.

4.4. Fostering social cohesion and stability

Beyond specific policies, political party minority networks have significant impact on promoting stability and social cohesiveness in democratic societies. When policies are developed with an awareness of the diverse needs and experiences of minority communities, it sends a message of inclusivity and fairness to the broader population. These policies are often designed to reduce disparities, promote equality, and address systemic injustices. As they are implemented and produce positive outcomes, they contribute to greater social cohesion by reducing social, economic, and racial divisions. This, in turn, leads to a more stable and harmonious society where citizens feel that their government is responsive to their needs and concerns.

5. FOSTERING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION





**POLITICAL
PARTY
MINORITY
NETWORKS
PLAY A
CRUCIAL ROLE
IN FOSTERING
POLITICAL
ENGAGEMENT
AND
PARTICIPATION**

Political party minority networks play a crucial role in fostering political engagement and participation among minority populations, addressing historical disparities, and promoting the principles of inclusivity and representation in a thriving democracy. Their primary objective is to empower and mobilize minority communities, equipping them with the necessary tools, knowledge, and resources to actively participate in the political process. Through targeted outreach, community organising, and educational initiatives, these networks not only cultivate a sense of civic duty but also encourage informed and meaningful participation. Ultimately, their efforts contribute to building a more vibrant, inclusive, and robust democracy.

5.1. Targeted outreach

One of the foundational strategies of political party minority networks is targeted outreach. These networks recognise that minority communities have often been underserved and underrepresented in political engagement efforts. As such, they work diligently to bridge this gap by reaching out to these communities directly. Targeted outreach involves engaging with minority communities through various channels, such as community meetings, cultural events, and grassroots organising. By establishing a presence in these communities, political party minority networks can establish trust, build relationships, and better understand the unique concerns and needs of these populations. This outreach is instrumental in breaking down barriers and encouraging individuals to become active participants in the political process.

The Migrants' Network in Fianna Fáil has several members who embody these principles. They are actively involved in outreach with migrant communities in Ireland, attending their events, cultural celebrations, community meetings, etc. Members of the Network officer board have been guests on migrant groups podcasts, speaking about their membership in Fianna Fáil, their involvement in politics in Ireland, and the difference they have made. These podcasts and various other forms of outreach have been incredible educational tools for members of the migrant community where oftentimes language can be a huge barrier to political participation.

5.2. Community organising

Community organising is a fundamental tool employed by political party minority networks to mobilise minority populations. It involves creating networks of individuals within these communities who are passionate about civic engagement and political participation. These organisers work to educate community members about the importance of their voices and votes in shaping policies that directly affect them.

Through community organising efforts, these networks empower minority individuals to take leadership roles, whether by becoming active volunteers, participating in voter registration drives, or organising local advocacy campaigns. This grassroots approach not only amplifies the voices of minority communities but also strengthens the fabric of democracy by fostering a sense of collective responsibility and empowerment.

5.3. Educational initiatives

Educational initiatives are a cornerstone of the work undertaken by political party minority networks. These initiatives aim to inform minority communities about their rights, the electoral process, and the significance of political participation. Educational programs may include workshops, seminars, informational resources, and even mentorship programs designed to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the political landscape effectively.

By providing education on political issues, candidates, and the electoral system, these networks enable minority communities to make informed decisions at the ballot box. Informed participation not only enhances the quality of democracy but also increases the likelihood of policies that address the specific concerns of minority populations being implemented.

Often these educational initiatives give network members the confidence to run for election themselves, both internally within the party and externally for local, regional, and national government. In 2022, three members of the Fianna Fáil Disability Network put themselves forward for election to the National Executive (Governing Body) of Fianna Fáil. The election took place during the Ard Fheis (National Conference) and after a comprehensive and robust campaign, two of the three were elected to the National Executive. This was a watershed moment for the network and the party and made history in that Fintan Bray, a young man with Down's syndrome, was one of the two people elected. Fintan made national media headlines in the days and weeks that followed as he was the first person in Ireland with Down's syndrome to be elected at a senior level within a political party. On that same day, the President of the Migrants' Network, Uruemu Adejinmi was also elected to the National Executive, the first black woman to be elected to it. It truly was a historic day for the minority networks and for the party, and showed the impact the networks are having within the organisation and indeed beyond.

5.4. Cultivating a sense of civic duty

A fundamental aspect of the work of political party minority networks is cultivating a sense of civic duty within minority populations. Historically marginalised and disenfranchised communities may feel disconnected from the political process or disheartened by past injustices. These networks work to instil a sense of agency, responsibility, and ownership over the democratic process.

By emphasising the importance of active citizenship and the power of collective action, political party minority networks inspire individuals to view political engagement as both a right and a responsibility. This transformational approach empowers minority communities to become stakeholders in their own future and to actively contribute to shaping the policies and decisions that affect their lives.

Across all of the minority networks in Fianna Fáil, some members have been appointed Local Area Representatives to run in the Local Elections in June 2024. Their involvement within the networks, the safe space they have had to develop their ideas and hone their skills, has proven invaluable in building confidence and support.

6. CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR DIALOGUE

As mentioned previously, political party minority networks serve as vital platforms for the creation of safe and inclusive spaces where members of minority communities can engage in meaningful dialogue about their concerns, aspirations, and priorities. These spaces are instrumental in encouraging open and constructive conversations, facilitating mutual understanding, and promoting collaboration among diverse groups. The interactions that take place within these safe spaces foster social harmony, dispel stereotypes, and cultivate a shared sense of purpose, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive society.

6.1. Encouraging open conversations

Safe spaces provided by political party minority networks encourage open and honest conversations. In many instances, members of these communities may have hesitated to voice their concerns or share their experiences due to fear of discrimination, bias, or exclusion. These safe spaces offer a welcoming environment where individuals can express their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment or prejudice.

Open conversations within these spaces allow individuals to articulate their unique perspectives, experiences, and grievances. It provides an opportunity for them to highlight issues that may have been previously overlooked or misunderstood. By fostering such dialogue, networks ensure that the voices of minority communities are not only heard but also valued in the political process.

6.2. Facilitating mutual understanding

Safe spaces created by political party minority networks serve as bridges for facilitating mutual understanding between members of different communities. Often, misunderstandings and misconceptions can arise from a lack of exposure or limited interaction between diverse groups. By bringing individuals from various backgrounds together in a respectful and supportive environment, these spaces provide a platform for dialogue and exchange of perspectives.

Through these interactions, individuals from majority and minority backgrounds can gain insights into each other's experiences, challenges, and aspirations. This mutual understanding helps dispel stereotypes, break down barriers, and foster a sense of empathy and solidarity often creating valuable allies. It is a powerful tool for building bridges of trust and cooperation among diverse segments of the population. In Fianna Fáil the minority networks are made up of both members of the specific minority group, and also allies of the minority group. The importance of allies cannot be overstated. They can be the voice of the minority when the minority group isn't at the table, or in the room when decisions are being made. Allies play a very important role within the networks and for the networks within the party.

6.3. Promoting collaboration

Safe spaces offered by political party minority networks promote collaboration and collective action among diverse groups.



These spaces often serve as incubators for joint initiatives, advocacy campaigns, and community projects aimed at addressing shared concerns and advancing common goals. Collaborative efforts are instrumental in bringing about positive change and influencing policy decisions. As previously mentioned, when the Fianna Fáil Women's Network participated in the development of the Women's Healthcare Policy, they highlighted that many women did not feel listened to or taken seriously when it came to their healthcare. This experience was often exacerbated for women coming from a migrant or Traveller background, women with a disability, or older women. This intersectionality occurs time and time again with people from minority groups and can lead to very successful joint initiatives. In June 2022, the officer board of the LGBTQI+ Network asked the members of the other minority networks to come and walk in the PRIDE parade in solidarity with them. Members of the Women's, Disability, and Migrants' Network showed up on the day and the result was a wonderfully diverse, colourful, and representative group representing Fianna Fáil in the Dublin PRIDE parade. It was a truly fantastic day for the members and the party, and the sense of solidarity, fellowship, and support was palpable. This tradition continued this year and will do so into the future.

By working together within these safe spaces, individuals from minority communities can pool their resources, expertise, and talents to amplify their impact. They can engage in grassroots organising, advocacy, and community development activities that address the root causes of their shared challenges. Collaboration not only enhances the effectiveness of these efforts but also cultivates a sense of unity and purpose among participants.

6.4. Fostering social harmony

The interactions and dialogues that occur within the safe spaces created by political party minority networks play a vital role in fostering social harmony. These spaces provide opportunities for individuals to recognise their shared humanity and common interests. As people from diverse backgrounds come together to discuss their concerns and aspirations, they often find common ground and areas of overlap.

This shared sense of purpose and understanding contributes to social harmony by promoting respect, empathy, and tolerance among individuals from different communities. It helps build bridges of solidarity that transcend racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural divides. In doing so, these safe spaces contribute to the cultivation of a more inclusive and cohesive society where diversity is celebrated, and differences are seen as a source of strength rather than division.

7. PROMOTING VOTER EDUCATION AND ACCESS

7.1. Addressing voter suppression

Voter suppression refers to a range of tactics and policies designed to hinder or restrict access to the voting process. Historically, minority communities have been disproportionately impacted by such tactics, including strict voter ID laws, the purging of voter rolls, and the reduction of polling places in minority neighbourhoods.

Political party minority networks actively work to address and combat voter suppression. They educate their communities about these tactics, ensuring that individuals are aware of their rights and the various ways in which voter suppression can manifest. This knowledge empowers citizens to recognise and report instances of voter suppression, helping to hold those responsible accountable. Moreover, these networks engage in legal and advocacy efforts to challenge discriminatory voting policies and practices. They often collaborate with civil rights organisations to initiate lawsuits and legal challenges against voter suppression measures, seeking to protect and expand voting rights for minority communities.

7.2. Providing accurate voter education

One pillar of the work undertaken by political party minority networks is providing accurate voter education. Misinformation and disinformation campaigns can be particularly harmful, spreading false information about the voting process, polling locations, registration deadlines, and eligibility criteria. These campaigns can deter eligible voters from participating in elections.

To combat this issue, these networks offer educational resources that clarify the voting process, debunk common myths, and provide clear and reliable information about registration, absentee voting, early voting, and Election Day procedures. Voter education efforts often include outreach through community events, informational materials, and digital platforms to ensure that the message reaches a wide audience. In 2023 the Migrants' Network in Fianna Fáil is undertaking a voter education campaign targeted at migrant voters, in collaboration with the local units of the party across the country. They will provide information, in the appropriate language, on registering to vote, getting your voting card before election day, and how to cast your vote under the proportional representation Single Transferable Vote (PRSTV) system. The Migrants' Network has previously worked closely with the Immigrant Council of Ireland on their voter education campaigns and on pilot programmes giving migrants the opportunity to do work placement with elected Councillors in local government.

Accurate voter education not only empowers individuals to participate in elections but also strengthens the democratic process by promoting informed and confident voters who are less susceptible to misinformation.

7.3. Advocating for equitable voting policies

Political party minority networks are strong advocates for equitable voting policies that ensure that all citizens have equal access to the ballot box. They actively work to influence party platforms and advocate for policies that expand voting access and protect the rights of minority communities.

Efforts may include supporting initiatives to implement automatic voter registration, expand early voting options, restore voting rights to formerly incarcerated individuals, and oppose restrictive voter ID laws. By advocating for these policies, these networks seek to remove barriers that have historically disenfranchised minority communities. Their advocacy extends to working with lawmakers to draft and sponsor bills that promote equitable voting practices. This engagement in the legislative process allows them to directly influence the creation and implementation of policies that protect and enhance access to the electoral process.



7.4. Removing barriers to voter access

Political party minority networks also actively work to remove barriers to voter access. This includes initiatives aimed at increasing the number of polling places in minority neighbourhoods, ensuring that voting locations are accessible to individuals with disabilities, and addressing issues related to long lines and wait times at polling stations.

Efforts to remove barriers to voter access also involve outreach to communities that may face challenges in the voting process, such as language barriers, lack of transportation, or limited access to information. By providing resources and assistance to address these challenges, political party minority networks ensure that all eligible citizens have the opportunity to cast their ballots.

In conclusion, political party minority networks play a vital role in promoting voter education and access, especially in the face of voter suppression and misinformation that disproportionately affect minority communities. Their work includes addressing voter suppression, providing accurate voter education, advocating for equitable voting policies, and removing barriers to voter access. By safeguarding and expanding voting rights for minority communities, these networks contribute to a more equitable and inclusive democratic process where every eligible citizen can participate in shaping their government and their future.

8. STRENGTHENING LONG-TERM ADVOCACY

Political party minority networks play a pivotal role in strengthening long-term advocacy efforts that extend beyond immediate electoral cycles. These networks are committed to advocating for policy changes that address deep-seated systemic inequalities and disparities faced by minority populations. By persistently highlighting these issues, proposing solutions, and maintaining a consistent presence in the political arena, these groups influence party platforms, legislative agendas, and public discourse. This sustained and strategic effort results in transformative change that benefits not only minority populations but society as a whole.

8.1. Recognising systemic inequalities

The systemic injustices and inequalities that have lasted for generations are well-known to political party minority networks. These inequalities often stem from historical discrimination, structural biases, and institutional barriers that have disadvantaged

minority communities in various aspects of life, including education, healthcare, employment, and criminal justice.

To address these systemic issues, political party minority networks engage in long-term advocacy. They recognise that true change requires a sustained commitment to challenging the status quo and pushing for reforms that dismantle deeply ingrained inequalities.

8.2. Influencing party platforms

One of the primary ways in which political party minority networks strengthen long-term advocacy is by influencing party platforms. These platforms outline the party's positions on various policy issues and serve as a roadmap for legislative priorities. By actively participating in the development of these platforms, these networks ensure that the concerns and priorities of minority communities are integrated into the party's long-term agenda.

Through persistent advocacy and collaboration with party leadership, these networks can shape the party's policy positions to reflect a commitment to addressing systemic inequalities. This process includes advocating for policies that promote equity, social justice, and inclusivity in areas such as healthcare access, education funding, criminal justice reform, and economic opportunity.

Shaping legislative agendas:

Political party minority networks also exert influence in shaping legislative agendas at local, regional, and national levels. They work to ensure that the policies advocated for in party platforms are translated into concrete legislative proposals and initiatives. By engaging with lawmakers, conducting research, and mobilising grassroots support, these networks play a critical role in pushing for meaningful legislative change.

Their efforts extend to monitoring the progress of legislation, advocating for amendments, and holding elected officials accountable for their commitments to addressing systemic inequalities. This sustained advocacy creates a feedback loop between the party, lawmakers, and the broader community, ensuring that policy changes are enacted and enforced effectively.

8.3. Maintaining a presence in public discourse

A key aspect of long-term advocacy undertaken by political party minority networks is maintaining a consistent presence in public discourse. These networks recognise that raising awareness and engaging the public on issues related to systemic inequalities is crucial for effecting lasting change.

They employ a variety of communication strategies, including media outreach, social media campaigns, public forums, and educational initiatives, to keep these issues at the forefront of public consciousness. By framing the discussion around equity, justice, and inclusivity, they build public support for policy changes and create a sense of urgency around addressing systemic inequalities.

8.4. Achieving transformative change

The ultimate goal of the long-term advocacy efforts of political party minority networks is to achieve transformative change. While progress may be incremental, the sustained and strategic advocacy of these networks has the potential to bring about significant shifts in policy, practice, and public perception.

In 2022 the Fianna Fáil Disability Network was nominated for a national award for its work in achieving transformative change. At the inaugural National Diversity and Inclusion Awards, the network was shortlisted in the Advancing Disability Equality category. The National Diversity Inclusion Awards are an opportunity to celebrate and champion individuals and organisations that go above and beyond in their commitment to providing excellence in all key areas of diversity and inclusion. Although the network didn't win the award on the night, the shortlisting recognised their incredible work in producing a policy paper for the party and in getting two members elected to the National Executive of the party. The network was proudly the only political party in attendance at the awards ceremony, with over 400 people from the corporate and business community in Ireland who are enjoying the benefits of making Diversity and Inclusion a business priority.

Over time, the influence of political party minority networks can result in legislative reforms that address systemic inequalities, greater representation of minority populations in decision-making bodies, and a shift in societal attitudes toward inclusivity and justice. This transformative change benefits not only minority communities but society as a whole by creating a more equitable and just environment. ●





METHOD OLOGY

MEASURING ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIVERSITY IN POLITICAL PARTIES - A PRACTICAL METHODOLOGY

BY DORA KIS-JAKAB AND NANDOR TOTH

This section develops a new method for measuring LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties. The proposed method uses internal data from political parties, such as surveys and focus group interviews, to assess attitudes toward LGBTQI+ party members. This data is then used to create a composite index of LGBTQI+ diversity for each party.

The findings of a pilot study using the proposed method showed that there was a significant difference in the level of LGBTQI+ diversity between the two political parties that participated in the study. The party with the higher score on the composite index was perceived as being more inclusive of LGBTQI+ people and had a higher level of support for LGBTQI+ rights among party members.

The findings of this section of the publication have several implications for political parties and future research. For political parties, the findings suggest that they should collect data on LGBTQI+ diversity on a regular basis and use this data to identify areas where they need to improve. For future research, the findings suggest that more data should be collected on LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties from a wider range of countries and that the relationship between LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties and other factors, such as party ideology, party structure, and the level of LGBTQI+ acceptance in the wider society, should be explored.

Overall, this section makes a significant contribution to our understanding of LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties and its implications for democracy and society as a whole.

1. INTRODUCTION

Diversity is increasingly recognised as an important asset for political parties. More diverse parties are better able to represent the needs and interests of all voters, and they are more likely to be successful in elections. However, many political parties still struggle to achieve diversity, particularly in leadership positions.

One way to improve diversity in political parties is to collect better data on LGBTQI+ diversity. This data can be used to identify areas where parties need to improve, and to develop targeted interventions to increase LGBTQI+ representation. However, there is currently a lack of reliable data on LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties.

This section aims to fill this gap by developing a new method for measuring LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties. The proposed method will use internal data from political parties, such as surveys and focus group interviews, to assess attitudes towards LGBTQI+ party members. This data will be used to create a composite index of LGBTQI+ diversity for each party.

The structure of this section:

The rest of this section of the publication is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the literature on diversity in political parties and the importance of LGBTQI+ diversity. Section 3 describes the proposed method for measuring LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties. Section 4 presents the findings of a pilot study using the proposed method. Section 5 discusses the implications of the findings for political parties and future research.

There is a growing body of literature on the importance of diversity in political parties. Parties that are more diverse are better able to represent the needs and interests of all voters. They are also more likely to be successful in elections. For example, a study by the Pew Research Center found that voters are more likely to support a political party that is more diverse.

LGBTQI+ diversity is particularly important for political parties. LGBTQI+ people are a growing and increasingly visible part of the electorate. Parties that are more inclusive of LGBTQI+ people are more likely to be successful in attracting and retaining LGBTQI+ voters.

Methodology:

The proposed method for measuring LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties is based on the following steps:

- Collect internal data from political parties, such as surveys and focus group interviews, to assess attitudes towards LGBTQI+ party members.
- Use a statistical analysis to create a composite index of LGBTQI+ diversity for each party. The index will take into account a variety of factors, such as the level of support for LGBTQI+ rights among party members, the perception of LGBTQI+ people as being welcome and respected in the party, and the presence of LGBTQI+ people in leadership positions.

Pilot study:

To determine whether the proposed method was feasible, a pilot study was conducted. The study involved collecting data from two political parties in the United Kingdom. The data was collected through a survey of party members. The survey asked respondents about their attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people and their perception of the level of LGBTQI+ diversity in the party.

The data was analysed using a statistical technique called factor analysis. Factor analysis is used to identify underlying dimensions in a set of data. In this case, factor analysis was used to identify the underlying dimensions of LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties.

The results of the factor analysis showed that there are two main dimensions of LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties:

- Attitudes towards LGBTQI+ rights: This dimension captures the level of support for LGBTQI+ rights among party members.
- Perception of LGBTQI+ inclusion: This dimension captures the perception of LGBTQI+ people as being welcome and respected in the party.
- A composite index of LGBTQI+ diversity was created for each party by combining the scores on the two dimensions. The index ranged from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating greater LGBTQI+ diversity.

Results:

The pilot study's results showed that there was a significant difference in the level of LGBTQI+ diversity between the two political parties. The party with the higher score on the composite index was perceived as being more inclusive of LGBTQI+ people and had a higher level of support for LGBTQI+ rights among party members.

Implications:

The findings of this pilot study suggest that the proposed method for measuring LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties is feasible and can be used to generate reliable data. This data can be used by political parties to identify areas where they need to improve their LGBTQI+ diversity and to develop targeted interventions to increase it.

2. GLOSSARY

The following chapter is a short conceptual introduction and clarification of some of the commonly used terms and ideas in this publication.

- **Data in politics**

In the last decade, data has become an indispensable tool for political parties. Political data primarily includes information about party members, donors, and potential voters and encompasses a wide range of data types, from basic contact information to more sensitive details like political opinions, donation history, and engagement with party activities. Additionally, social media interactions, website visits, and even data from canvassing activities are part of the broader political data ecosystem.

- **Diversity**

Diversity is primarily concerned with who is represented in a collective and in what number and percentage they are present there. A diverse collective displays a mixture of differences and similarities in terms of, for instance, characteristics, values, and other identities, such as race, age, gender, sexual identity, or physical ability.

- **Diversity data**

Diversity data is an umbrella term for data on individuals' sensitive and protected characteristics, including ethnic identity, disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity. In many countries diversity data merits special legal protection, one example being the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Diversity data must always be collected, analysed, and stored closely following the relevant legal constraints, which, among other possible requirements, typically demand data anonymisation and strictly voluntary data collection.

- **Equity**

Ensuring that no one is disadvantaged because of belonging to specific groups or having diverse identities is the goal of equity, which requires the fair and impartial treatment of all people. Equity aims to identify and eliminate unfair biases, stereotypes, and barriers putting people belonging to underrepresented groups at a disadvantage. Equity differs from equality since it does not assume that each individual should be treated in the same way, but rather takes individual, specific circumstances into consideration when implementing unique treatment in order to achieve an equal result for all.

- **Internal data of political parties**

Data related to the internal workings of political parties is typically generated by internal surveys and focus group interviews. It generally denotes high-quality data that is collected from within the political party and is related to important metrics measuring the organisation's performance, monitoring internal working processes, and supporting data-driven decision-making. Internal data also provides feedback on the success of the party's internal policies.

- **Inclusion**

When we talk about inclusion, it refers to how people belonging to underrepresented groups fare in a collective and what experiences they have in the group. The aim of inclusion is to ensure that everyone is welcome and feels empowered in the organisation. It helps each individual feel respected, supported, and accepted in the group and ensures that people from diverse backgrounds are able to meaningfully participate in, contribute to and profit from collective processes.

- **Survey**

Survey denotes the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting data from a certain group of individuals, most frequently through paper-based or online forms and questionnaires. Surveys combine and aggregate the generated data and translate it into meaningful information to support future data-based decisions and policies. Surveys can be self-administered or conducted by interviewers or other intermediaries. While some surveys are anonymous, others clearly identify the respondents.

3. DATA IN POLITICS

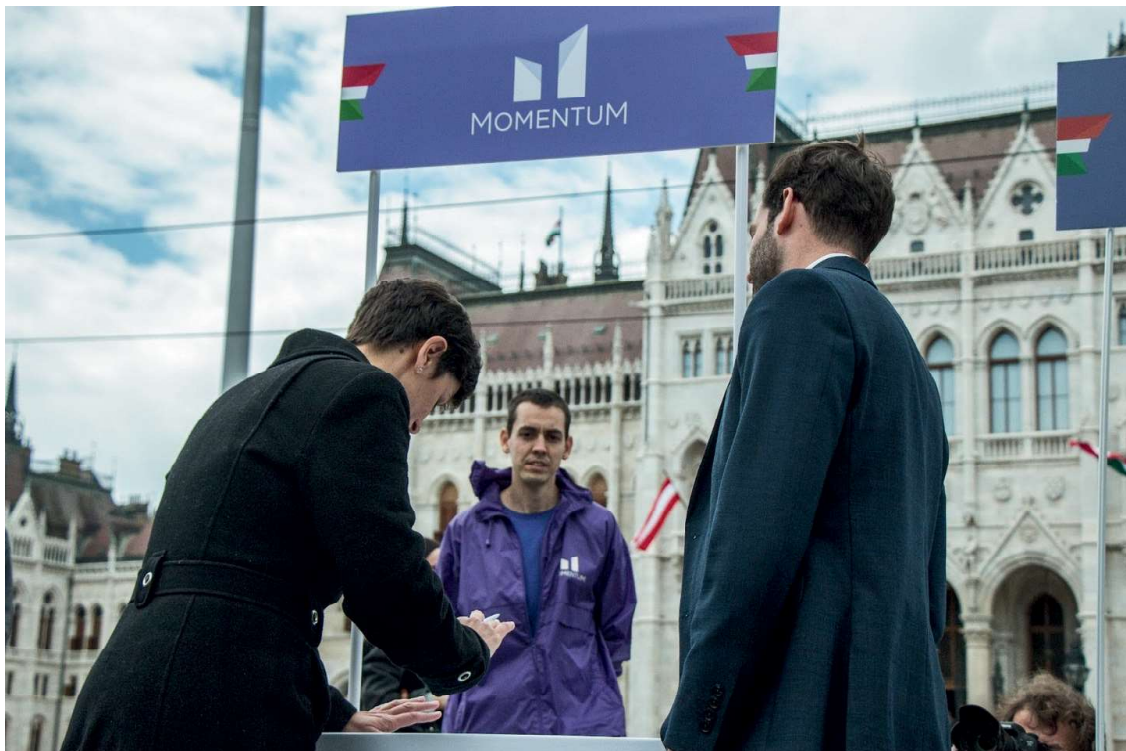
3.1. Political data

Data's integration into politics has significantly transformed the landscape, especially in the digital era. Historically, data usage in politics was primarily confined to rudimentary opinion polls and demographic statistics. However, the advent of the digital age brought about a paradigm shift. The proliferation of internet usage and social media platforms since the early 2000s provided a fertile ground for harvesting vast amounts of data. Political campaigns started employing sophisticated data analytics to understand voter preferences, behaviours, and trends more accurately. This digital revolution in politics reached its zenith with events like Barack Obama's data-driven campaigns in 2008 and 2012, which were heralded for their innovative use of big data and analytics to target voters and mobilise support. (37)

37 - Scherer, 'How Obama's Data Crunchers Helped Him Win | CNN Business'.

The pivotal moment that underscored the potential perils of data in politics was the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Revealed in 2018, it showed how this political consulting firm had accessed millions of Facebook users' data without consent, using it to influence voter opinion. (38) This scandal triggered a global outcry over data privacy, leading to significant regulatory changes. The European Union, in particular, responded by implementing the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018. GDPR marked a robust effort to give individuals control over their personal data and to simplify the regulatory environment for international business by unifying the regulation within the EU. (39)

Following these developments, political parties and campaigners recognized the crucial role of data in shaping political strategies while acknowledging the need to navigate a more regulated environment. The GDPR and similar regulations worldwide imposed stringent rules on data processing, mandating consent for data collection and ensuring data protection. Political organisations had to adapt by investing in compliance frameworks to ensure their data practices conformed to legal standards. This increased regulation meant a more transparent and accountable approach to data usage but also posed significant challenges in how parties could leverage data without infringing on privacy rights.



In the last ten years liberal parties have embraced data collection to further target voters while navigating data protection regulations.

38 - Confessore, 'Cambridge Analytica and Facebook'.

39 - 'Cambridge Analytica, GDPR - 1 Year on - a Lot of Words and Some Action | Privacy International'.

3.1.1. Understanding data

Understanding what constitutes 'data' in a political context became more nuanced in light of these regulations. Political data primarily includes information about party members, donors, and potential voters. This encompasses a wide range of data types, from basic contact information to more sensitive details like political opinions, donation history, and engagement with party activities. Additionally, social media interactions, website visits, and even data from canvassing activities are part of the broader data ecosystem. With heightened awareness and regulation, political parties now have to be exceptionally careful in how they acquire, store and use such data, ensuring compliance with legal standards and ethical considerations.

Still, effective data collection is an indispensable tool for political parties. Most parties use a plethora of ways for collecting the data of their potential voters, many times following the lead of traditional marketing techniques. In this framework, the aim of voter data collection is to better understand the wants, needs, and values of the party's target audience, namely, its potential and actual voters. Evaluating the voters via data collection is a necessary and effective tool for maximising the party's election results. (40)

While collecting voters' data can be a highly refined and complex process, it can also be as easy as candidates and party members jotting down voter preferences while canvassing. That is, there are several potential sources of free data available for political parties, such as data disclosed by individuals in electoral rolls, insights gained from canvassing, or data inferred from party mailing lists. Besides these, political parties also have the option to purchase data. These sources include data disclosed by individuals on social media, gained from other commercial sources, or by data modeling. (41)

As a result of the wide availability and practical usefulness of voters' data, data-driven political campaigns have become more and more widespread in the past decade. Nowadays, political parties collect and apply data in order to produce highly targeted campaigns. For this goal, they collect more and more data, build better and more sophisticated databases as well and apply specific analytical tools to better understand their voters. (42) A well-known example is Trump's campaign in 2016, where they claimed the ability to target 13.5 million persuadable voters in battleground states. (43)

However, data is not only useful for political parties to better understand their external environment. While collecting relevant, full and accurate data on the party's voters is highly important, data can also be a significant tool for understanding their internal state of affairs as well. Capturing data related to the internal workings of political parties serves quite similar purposes as it does in the corporate environment.

40 - (PDF) Decision-Based Voter Segmentation: An Application for Campaign Message Development'. 310-311.

41 - Dommett, 'Data-Driven Political Campaigns in Practice'.

42 - Kreiss and Howard, 'New Challenges to Political Privacy'. 1032.

43 - Persily, 'Can Democracy Survive the Internet?' 65.

For businesses, internal data denotes generally high-quality data that is collected from within the organisation. Internal data is related to important metrics measuring the company's performance, such as accounting, production, sales and HR data. Some businesses also use user-satisfaction surveys and focus group interviews to generate internal data. Businesses use internal data for several purposes: to support decision-making, to measure product quality or to monitor the effectiveness of the company's working processes. (44)

Political parties might be motivated to collect data on their internal workings for much the same purposes. When parties wish to have a solid, data-driven base for their decision-making, if they attempt to get feedback on the success of their policies and gain deeper insight into their internal processes, collecting internal data is an indispensable first step. (45) Thus, collecting and analysing internal data is one important tool in the toolbox of all political parties. As for liberal, value-driven political parties, collecting internal data has a specific added value that has to do with diversity.

3.1.2. Diversity and data

In the corporate world, there is more and more focus on the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). In this context, DEI measures gain growing importance in order to ensure a safe and equitable working environment for every employee. RBC's recent data clearly illustrates this, showing that 40% of S&P companies discussed DEI policies during their second-quarter earning calls in 2021, which is a 6% increase compared to the same quarter of the previous year. (46)

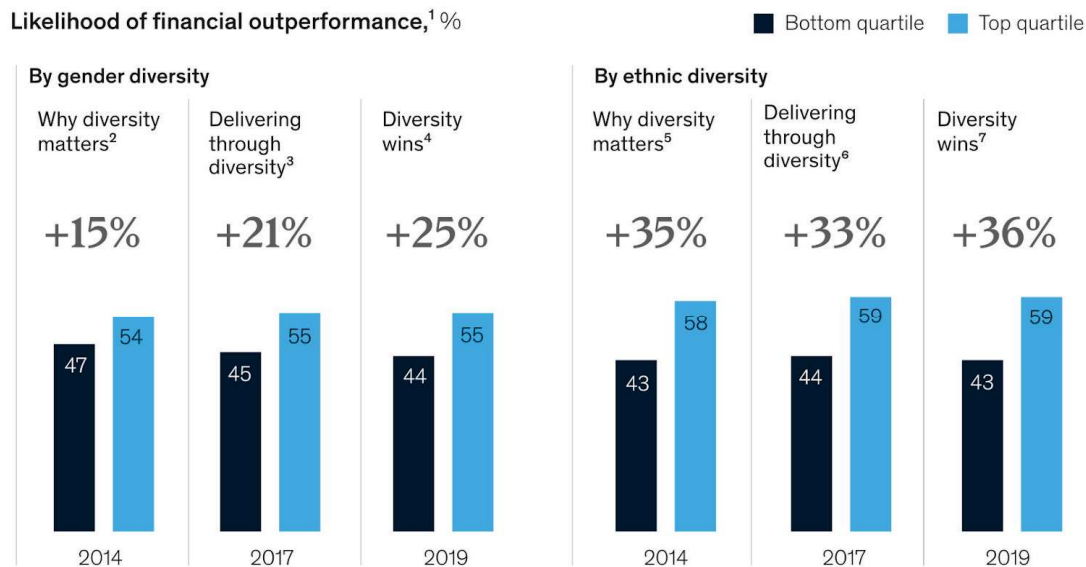
While the growing emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion is morally commendable, at the same time this change also has practical advantages for businesses. That is, according to a McKinsey report based on a data set drawn from 15 countries and more than 1000 large companies, there is a clear correlation between a company's diversity and business performance. Based on data taken from 2019, the report states in terms of profitability and gender diversity within executive teams the companies that are in the top quartile in this metric were 25 percent more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile. This marks a 4 percent growth compared to 2015. The report found that the possible contributing factors to this correlation are increased employment engagement and a wider pool of talent for diverse companies. (47)

44 - Löfgren, Gravem, and Haraldsen, 'A Glimpse into the Businesses' Use of Internal and External Data Sources ...'. 57; 62.

45 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 7.

46 - Stevens, '40% of Companies Discussed Diversity on Earnings Calls, up from 4% in Prior Quarter, New Data Shows'.

47 - 'What Is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I)? | McKinsey'.



¹Likelihood of financial outperformance vs the national industry median; p-value <0.05, except 2014 data where p-value <0.1. 2n = 383; Latin America, UK, and US earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) margin 2010-13. *n = 991; Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, UK, and US; EBIT margin 2011-15. *n = 1,039; 2017 companies for which gender data available in 2019, plus Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; EBIT margin 2014-18. 5n = 364; Latin America, UK, and US; EBIT margin 2010-13. 5n = 589; Brazil, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, UK, and US; EBIT margin 2011-15. *n = 533; Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, UK, and US, where ethnicity data available in 2019; EBIT margin 2014-18. Source: Diversity Wins data set - May 19, 2020 |McKinsey' Report

In summary, according to this McKinsey report, there are several such advantages that businesses can expect when they implement DEI measures that can be directly translated into increased performance, such as:

1. Bringing in more talent and having a wider talent pool by engaging with wider demographics;
2. Increased quality of decision-making by bringing in a variety of perspectives;
3. Better innovation and increased customer insight;
4. Increased employee motivation, better team-work and more employee satisfaction;
5. Improving the organisation's image and perception, especially during crises. (48)

Now, the values of diversity, inclusion, and equity are strongly interrelated. Organisations subscribing to implement these values are subscribing to support people belonging to underrepresented and disadvantaged groups in order to create a more supportive and fair environment for people from all walks of life. While these values are linked together, there are subtle differences between them. Namely, diversity is primarily concerned with who is represented in the organisation, and focuses on the number of people present who belong to underrepresented groups. In contrast, inclusion refers to how people belonging to those groups actually fare in the organisation. That is, it is more concerned with individual, situational experiences. Lastly, equity is about the fair treatment of all people and is about ensuring that no one is disadvantaged because they belong to specific groups. (49)

Liberal parties subscribe to implementing the core liberal values in order to create a freer, more equal, more tolerant, and responsible world for all. Now, it would only make sense to start this work internally, within the party's own ranks. When talking about political parties, many are calling for similar changes in politics that are already happening in the corporate world resulting in more diversity in the organisations. Initiating change for political parties can happen as small as on the local level, where entering into leadership positions is most of the time a voluntary option. Some argue that more inclusion in this area and formal efforts to have more diversity from underrepresented groups on the local leadership level are likely to drive a change throughout the whole party. (50)

But whether a party starts small on the local level or aims higher and attempts to implement DEI party policies in an all-encompassing way, in order to achieve the best results it is crucial to first get a good picture of the current realities of the party. This is where the effort to collect relevant internal data becomes essential.

For liberal parties that aim to be more diverse and, as a part of this effort, wish to ensure stronger LGBTQI+ representation within the party, there are several benefits of collecting internal data on the current state of affairs. Based on data, decision-makers might be able to get a grasp on the realities of the party's LGBTQI+ community, gain a clearer picture of the situation of the party's individual LGBTQI+ members - activists, employees, candidates or elected representatives -, compare their experiences to those of their colleagues and map out the attitudes of the whole community towards them. In short, data could help them understand the needs and aims, as well as the limits and prejudices faced by the representatives of the LGBTQI+ community and the more general attitudes shaping those realities. (51)

49 - 'What Is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I)? | McKinsey'.

50 - Sharma, 'Diversity and Inclusion Are Tools for a Political Party's Success'.

51 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 7.

In short, there are several arguments for a party to invest in understanding the actual situation through data. These efforts, if the collected data is appropriately acted upon, could lead to a better, more just, and effective internal structure. That, furthermore, could result in a more diverse political party with increased integrity and better ability to fulfill its voters' expectations, resulting in a successful party authentically representing its core values to its target audience.

If they have enough quality data, political parties can take the necessary steps to eliminate discrimination, advance equal opportunity for people belonging to disadvantaged groups, and, overall, ensure diversity and inclusion. But for that, they need to systematically identify and minimise disadvantages and prejudices, recognise and answer specific needs, and encourage LGBTQI+ people to participate in internal and external public life. (52)

3.1.3 Internal benefits of LGBTQI+ data collection

Thus, just as in the business sector, there are several benefits of collecting internal data for political organisations as well. Political parties, just like companies, must ensure seamless internal operations in order to achieve external success. For this, it is necessary that the party works well as a political home for all its activists, as well as a stable place of work for its staff, and a fair framework for the political ambitions of its potential candidates and elected representatives.

Understanding the situation of LGBTQI+ party members via data is conducive to taking well-targeted action whenever necessary. Valid data helps identify the specific problems and barriers that LGBTQI+ party members face within the organisation and maps out the attitude of the general party towards them. This way decision-makers are able to map out necessary action in order to ensure a fairer playing field for all and to maximise the potential of LGBTQI+ staff members, candidates, and party members. Relevant data can also contribute to undertaking targeted and well-thought-out action on the local level, instead of imposing uniform and inadequate solutions to local issues. (53)

In summary, a party needs sufficient knowledge of the actual situation of the members of its LGBTQI+ community in order to improve the efficiency of its initiatives targeting this cohort with DEI initiatives. Without valid data, all the parties' efforts to support this group are based on bare assumptions and thus, might be both misleading and inefficient. Decision-makers must be aware of the current trends, the actual environment, and real issues in order to base their efforts to create a diverse community on facts instead of speculation. In short, possessing relevant internal data is an indispensable component of successful initiatives. (54)

52 - Great Britain. Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Collecting Information on Gender Identity'.

53 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 7.

54 - Pasterny. 7.



Diversity networks have been flourishing in liberal parties to identify and empower LGBTQI+ members.

3.1.4 External benefits of LGBTQI+ data collection

This publication's main focus is internal data collection and how it contributes to the betterment of liberal parties' inner operations and mechanisms. Still, it's worth mentioning that beyond these internal advantages, there are marked external benefits of building a more diverse party as well. These are also achievable through a detailed understanding and subsequent improvement of the party's inner workings.

It is especially true for liberal parties that offer to strive for a freer, better, and more tolerant world. Truly following what it preaches markedly enhances the party's credibility in the eyes of its supporters. Thus, it raises the party's standing if it creates a freer, better, and more tolerant internal environment for all its members, including its LGBTQI+ party members.

When collecting LGBTQI+ data for the purpose of improving its internal structure and increasing diversity, the party sends clear signals of its liberal commitments not only to its LGBTQI+ members but to all party members in general, as well as to the party's voters, stating that for them LGBTQ+ people and their experiences matter. By this action and the resulting well-grounded policies, the party demonstrates to the general public that it takes LGBTQI+ people seriously and is committed to ensuring a diverse environment for all. This, according to experts, can beneficially impact the LGBTQI+ members' motivation and their dedication to the organisation as an added benefit. (55)

While data collection is a necessary first step, true credibility is only gained when a party is able to demonstrate its real commitment towards its values by real steps to become a more diverse and welcoming place for all and measurable improvements. In order to do that, the party needs data and needs to take action based on the collected data. (56) In short, while collecting data is a first and essential step in ensuring a more diverse party, real change only comes from effective action based on the knowledge and understanding acquired through that data.

3.2 How to measure LGBTQI+ diversity?

When it comes to LGBTQI+ diversity, collecting and analysing relevant data is an essential tool. Now, data on gender identity and sexual orientation falls under the broader category of diversity data, which also includes data on ethnic identity, disability status and other characteristics. Diversity data is sensitive data, a characteristic that entails several issues when an organisation decides to collect and handle it. (57)

In general, when an organisation decides to collect diversity data of any form, the key is to decide how it wishes to measure diversity. This is a common challenge faced by many organisations aiming to increase LGBTQI+ diversity. Collecting diversity data is a complex process, this is why it is essential for the organisation to first have a clear idea on what insight it wishes to gain from this process and what information it is able to collect safely and effectively. (58) Answering these questions outlines the best metrics to measure diversity in the specific organisation.

A seemingly easy and convenient solution for political parties would be to simply measure the number and percentage of LGBTQI+ party members, staff members or elected officials, and possibly also compare these numbers over time. Although using this possible approach, decision-makers might gain some insight into the actual state of the organisation, it is at the same time a somewhat limited approach for a number of reasons that mostly has to do with LGBTQI+ data's status as sensitive diversity data. The following subchapters outline the common stumbling blocks organisations encounter when they decide to measure LGBTQI+ diversity.

3.2.1 LGBTQI+ data is sensitive

When a party decides to measure its LGBTQI+ diversity, it soon realises that collecting diversity data in general is a strenuous effort.

56 - Pasterny, 7.

57 - Norman, 'Data on Diversity in the Workplace'.

58 - Norman.

Firstly, it is because LGBTQI+ data is highly sensitive, which means that disclosing it is perceived to be somewhat risky, and thus, those concerned are more unlikely to provide it, also, it is complicated to safely and legally handle and store it. This results in low disclosure rates and difficulties in handling and storing data.

- **Low disclosure rates**

LGBTQI+ data is highly sensitive for those concerned. In many contexts and environments being LGBTQI+ might still put someone in a disadvantaged position, a real or perceived risk many would prefer to avoid. Even in liberal political parties LGBTQI+ people might feel inclined to keep information on their sexual orientation confidential, so as not to take unnecessary risks. This is even more true when parties are operating under intolerant political regimes and in adverse political climates.

Thus, it is not surprising that, according to studies, the disclosure rates for sexual orientation data are often lower than other diversity data, such as gender or ethnicity. Disclosure rates might also show significant differences across demographic groups and in specific contexts. (59) There are several possible underlying factors for this. Studies on these factors were mostly conducted in the corporate environment, (60) not specifically in the context of politics, although it can be assumed that similar factors govern the area of politics as well. For instance, a 2018 survey demonstrates that the feeling of trust has a key role in the willingness of sexual minorities to disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace. The more respondents trust that the data will be stored safely and only used legitimately, the more likely it is that they willingly participate in relevant surveys. (61)

Transparent communication is a key factor when an organisation attempts to build trust. When people belonging to the LGBTQI+ community do not have a clear understanding of the purpose of data collection, it is unlikely that there will be a high disclosure rate of sensitive data. While clear communication is always necessary, however, being transparent might prove tricky as well.

Studies show that not all rationale for data collection is as convincing for respondents as others. For instance, according to a study conducted in 2019, emphasising the organisation's commitment to the more broad values of fairness and inclusion was less convincing for participants than the idea of reflecting the diversity of the wider community. (62) What seems to be the key is that participants must have a clear understanding of the values underlying the data collection effort and must strongly identify with those values at the same time.

Besides the possible lack of trust and shared values, there is another adverse factor that might be even harder to overcome.

59 - Nicks et al., 'Encouraging Sexual Orientation Disclosure in Recruitment Research Report'. 5.

60 - Nicks et al. 9.

61 - Capell et al., 'Explaining Sexual Minorities' Disclosure: The Role of Trust Embedded in Organizational Practices'.

62 - Nicks et al., 'Encouraging Sexual Orientation Disclosure in Recruitment Research Report'. 10.

According to studies, in many European countries LGBTQI+ job applicants are still discriminated against. This effect is also present during the recruitment process (63) – such as LGBTQI+ people having lower interview rates – and in the workplace. (64) Fear of being discriminated against if they disclose their LGBTQI+ status is also a legitimate concern for party members. Even if the party itself offers a more tolerant environment, the wider political realities and considerations, as well as the country's overall political climate might result in the unjust stumping of openly LGBTQI+ party members' political aspirations.

Thus, it is evident that organisations dedicated to getting information on their LGBTQI+ diversity status face several challenges (65). What is more, studies show that even if the above-mentioned stumbling blocks are targeted and the key negative attitudes towards disclosure are directly addressed when outlining and conducting data collection methods, there is still no significant impact on the disclosure rate of sexual orientation or on the probability of wholly opting out of the disclosure form. (66)

- **Difficult data collection and handling**

As LGBTQI+ data belongs to the category of sensitive diversity data, the process of its collection and handling is also beset with difficulties. Diversity data, per definition, is a collection of protected characteristics of individuals, including sexual orientation and gender identity. (67) That is, it merits special protection.

Thus, the first thing any organisation willing to collect LGBTQI+ data must do is inquire into the legal restrictions on collecting and storing protected data in their own countries. Closely and expertly following the specific legal requirements is an essential condition of any such data collection. (68) Although data collection must always be governed by the locally applicable legal framework, a good rule of thumb would be that in most legal settings protected data can only be collected in such a way that it cannot be traced back to any specific individual. That is one of the main principles to follow when handling sensitive data is to ensure that the sensitive information can never be directly linked back to the respondent. Besides, the principle of non-coercion is also essential. Sensitive data can only be provided freely and willingly. This is why, in terms of LGBTQI+ data, self-declaration is of vital importance. Anonymity and non-coercion are the principles that must always guide any LGBTQI+ data collection.

Although anonymity and non-coercion are principles that must never be ignored and might make the process more complex, there are ways to work with them in mind and still successfully collect relevant data. This is because the main aim of collecting diversity data is for the organisation to identify whether it needs to take action and change its practices.

63 - Ahmed, Andersson, and Hammarstedt, 'Are Gay Men and Lesbians Discriminated against in the Hiring Process?'

64 - Nicks et al., 'Encouraging Sexual Orientation Disclosure in Recruitment Research Report'. 10.

65 - Nicks et al. 11.

66 - Nicks et al. 33.

67 - Norman, 'Data on Diversity in the Workplace'.

68 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 9.

While these practices definitely affect each LGBTQI+ individual belonging to the organisation, still, change is still not aimed at the direct betterment of the position of specific individuals but at the betterment of the overall practices of the organisation, only indirectly affecting the position of each and every individual. This is why the legal requirement of anonymizing diversity data is not a major setback. Diversity initiatives are not about identifying and analysing the situation of individual persons, but about looking at aggregate data that describe greater trends. (69)

Still, anonymous data collection and adequate, safe data storage require special considerations, which makes the whole process more difficult. These considerations are mainly outlined by the different methods of sensitive data collection, which all require different approaches.

In the corporate environment one of the more common ways of LGBTQI+ data collection is to ask optional demographic questions through HR information systems. This could take the form of asking questions of gender identity and sexual orientation in the application process or at any point of the employment lifecycle. For instance, many companies ask those optional questions in staff satisfaction and engagement surveys. If answered, the experiences of LGBTQI+ employees can be cross-referenced with general satisfaction and engagement scores. A third option would be to take snapshots of employees at different stages of their employment, such as in the application process, during employment and in exit interviews. (70)

There are several legal constraints and security requirements regarding all of those methods. In general, it is essential to make sure that all sensitive data is collected, handled and stored safely and securely. Stonewall describes several specific considerations on capturing and storing LGBTQI+ data. First of all, they state that any HR record system where sensitive data is stored must be secure and confidential. This also means that access to those records should be limited to a handful of specific people. (71)

Processing surveys and snapshots that ask for the disclosure of diversity data also merit specific precautions. When processing them, experts state that the organisation should never publish raw data, only disclose data in an aggregated manner. The main consideration is to always maintain the complete anonymity of the respondents. This is to ensure that no one is able to trace back any answers to specific individuals. Maintaining anonymity, however, can be near impossible when survey takers cannot expect a sufficiently large response rate. For instance, in many organisations, it could be quite easy to trace back answers to specific individuals belonging to less numerous groups, such as trans people, even if the condition of anonymity is, in principle, ensured. (72)

69 - Norman, 'Data on Diversity in the Workplace'.

70 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 9-10.

71 - Pasterny. 15.

72 - Pasterny. 15.

3.2.2 LGBTQI+ data is self-reported

Low disclosure rates, combined with difficulties in processing and storing sensitive data might pose a considerable challenge for organisations willing to collect LGBTQI+ data. However, there is a further difficulty when it comes to LGBTQI+ data collection. Namely, organisations typically interested in LGBTQI+ data that is strictly self-reported. In that case, all such data comes from people willingly reporting on it. However, as it was discussed above, not all individuals feel comfortable disclosing their gender identity or sexual orientation in the context of such data collection. Thus, it is a considerable challenge for LGBTQI+ data collection and low disclosure rates might prove to be a main setback in many organisations hoping for people willing to report their data.



Parties are using CRM systems like Nation Builder, Odoo or Voter360 to manage membership data, yet data accuracy depends on the willingness of members to provide their data.

Experts attempted to devise several possible ways that might increase disclosure rates and encourage people to report on their sensitive data. Most of those attempted solutions concern clear, transparent communication towards the respondents about the specific aims and exact process of data collection, as well as assurances for the safe and secure handling and storing of such data, as mentioned in the previous sub-chapter.

According to the resource published by researchers of UK charity Stonewall, there is a list of information an organisation must share with its members to raise disclosure rates and encourage its respondents to report their data, such as the followings:

- The specific reason for the organisation's data collection and how it is connected to the organisation's values;
- The specific data-safety measures applied by the organisation;
- Information on where the data is stored;
- Information on who will access the data;
- The specific ways the collected data will be used by the organisation;
- Information on whether the data will be stored and handled anonymously or confidentially;
- Description of the improvements previous similar data collections enabled. (73)

Even though all those considerations are helpful guides for organisations committed to increasing their diversity based on data, still, there is still little research that offers surefire ways to increase voluntary data disclosure. The majority of research primarily focuses on attitudes similar to the ones mentioned above: increasing respondents' trust in the processes of data collection and storage, informing participants of the added value of the endeavour, easing their fears and reservations, and gaining their trust and cooperation. (74)

However, some experts caution that even if the above-mentioned considerations are taken into account during the planning phase of the data collection process, there is still little or no improvement guaranteed in voluntary disclosure rates. In a 2019 study, which involved randomised controlled trials run on a recruitment platform, researchers tested three different introductory statements on applicants' voluntary disclosure rates of data relating to their sexual orientation.

They attempted to address some of the above-described negative attitudes related to low disclosure rates. The targeted attitudes included the applicants' mistrust in the safe storage of data, their belief that sharing data might disadvantage them through the application process, and that they might not understand the value and purpose of data disclosure. Their trial aimed to address those issues separately and compare the resulting disclosure rates with the standard equal opportunities form used by the platform serving as the study's control. (75)

After concluding the trial, researchers found that none of the treatment statements, aimed to alleviate these negative attitudes, had a significant impact on disclosure rates. Moreover, experts added their concern that pointing out the privacy issues and other difficulties when collecting sensitive data might actually further lower disclosure rates.

73 - Pasterny. 23-34.

74 - 'Improving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Starts with Good Data'.

75 - Nicks et al., 'Encouraging Sexual Orientation Disclosure in Recruitment Research Report'.

This is because emphasising the possible issues draws the participants' attention to problems that they might not have considered before, thus making them even more concerned and less likely to disclose sensitive data. (76)

3.2.3 Numbers and percentages are not the full picture

Despite all of the above-outlined concerns and difficulties, let us suppose for a minute that a political party manages to successfully collect a sufficient amount of valid data on the numbers and percentage of its LGBTQI+ members. The issue is, as many researchers point out, that only having this information on numbers still might not provide the full picture necessary for further action.

That is because real diversity is not just about the number or percentage of people belonging to specific minority groups participating in the organisation. It is also, equally important, how those people fare and advance in the organisation and how the majority sees them and relates to them. Are they able to fulfill their full potential? Are the same routes open to them as to members of the majority group? Are they truly welcome, treated fairly, and duly respected? Are they progressing without being held back by structural difficulties or prejudices? Positive answers to those questions are what should be the aim of all liberal political parties and the potential issues and obstructions are what must be sized up when we are asking questions about our party's LGBTQI+ diversity.

More generally researchers suggest a list of specific questions organisations should take stock of in order to get a clear picture of the current level of diversity and inclusivity for underrepresented groups.

These possible questions, somewhat tailored to the realities of political parties, are as follows:

1. Who do you let in the party?
2. How do you see those people?
3. Who do you let them be in the party?
4. What do you let them do in broader politics and within the party?
5. How do you let them do it? (77)

76 - Nicks et al.

77 - Llopis, 'How To Measure Inclusion'.

As for the first question, experts point out that even if an organisation has successful diversity politics, meaning that they bring in enough people belonging to specific disadvantaged groups, it does not follow that those individuals are truly integrated into the community. It is not enough for the right numbers to be there, all people also must have a fair chance to succeed, relative to their talents and ambitions and not their group affiliations. (78)

The second question is also crucial for liberal parties. Decision-makers need to understand the general party member's attitudes towards members of disadvantaged groups. Are they valued, respected, and included as individuals? Are party members' attitudes overwhelmingly positive or are there hidden pockets of prejudice and reservations? Are these individuals only seen as welcome - or unwelcome - representatives of their group?

This also connects with the third question. Very few people wish to solely be the party's token minority figure. The third question thus asks whether the party allows LGBTQI+ people to discover and share their own, complex identity or is pressuring them to conform to a preconceived, ready-made identity.

As regards the fourth and fifth questions, they also inquire whether the party allows LGBTQI+ people to meaningfully contribute to the party's efforts in their own way or does it only rewards them when they are conforming to a narrow, preconceived role designated to them. Can they succeed in their own specific way or are they only there to check the box of diversity? (79)

The answers given to those questions indicate the work needed in order to create a more meaningfully diverse political party. Of course, in order to be able to answer those questions, the organisation should have some level of understanding of the above-mentioned quantitative data, namely, the number and percentage of its LGBTQI+ members. But, as those numbers and percentages are quite difficult to obtain, and as they do not give the full picture, political parties might consider testing other routes as well when it comes to answering questions of diversity. In the following, the publication proposes an alternative metric to measure a party's diversity, namely, a sharper focus on the party members' attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people and issues.

3.2.4. Attitudes: an alternative metric

The rationale behind focusing on the attitudes of the whole community, and not only on the experiences of members of the LGBTQI+ community, is both practical and

78 - Llopis.

79 - Llopis.

80 - 'Germany's AfD Threatens Law Suit over Gay Marriage'.

81 - 'Gay in the AfD: "We're Not Seeking Equality" - DW - 03/17/2017'.

ideological. It is practical because collecting data from the whole community is more convenient than collecting sensitive data only from those party members who identify as members of the LGBTQI+ community. Many worries connected to collecting data specifically from members of this minority group – such as mistrust, fear, and low disclosure rates – can somewhat be bypassed by switching focus from the minority group to the whole party as the designated providers of data.

But this switch has some ideological implications as well, based on preferences that match well with fundamental liberal values. Liberals strongly believe in meritocracy. But in order to have a meritocratic structure one must make sure that the foundations of the structure itself are fair and unbiased, so that all that differentiates between individuals is their talents and efforts, and not arbitrary characteristics such as group affiliations. We can only state that we have a level playing field where meritocracy blossoms if we ensure that no one is disadvantaged by traits they have little or no control over.

If an LGBTQI+ individual cannot advance in their chosen career path because of the party's structural disadvantages, the basic tenet of liberalism, the commitment to meritocracy, is in danger. This can also go the other way. Even if some LGBTQI+ individuals ascend through party ranks to high positions, it does not necessarily mean that the party itself is diverse or committed to advancing the situation of LGBTQ+ people in general.

There are some real-life examples of LGBTQI+ individuals advancing in otherwise intolerant parties, even to quite high positions. One example would be the German far-right populist party, AfD. The party openly opposes gay marriage, as well as the right of same-sex couples for adoption, vocally advocating the traditional family model instead. Still, the party has an LGBTQI+ group called 'Alternative Homosexuals' as well as politicians openly identifying as LGBTQI+. (80, 81) As evident, it does not follow that the party and its policies are advancing the position of LGBTQI+ people.

The first female and openly LGBTQI+ Serbian Prime Minister, Ana Brnabic, is another case in point. Brnabic maintains a restrained position towards the LGBTQI+ community and closely follows the policies of her predecessor, fellow SNS party member and president Aleksandar Vučić. (82) Vučić canceled EuroPride celebrations in Belgrade in 2022 (83) and this year he vetoed the signing of the country's law on same-sex union. (84) As a consequence, LGBTQI+ groups frequently critique the Prime Minister for doing little to improve the position of Serbia's LGBTQI+ community.

82 - 'Brnabic: A Female Leader Who Is Unlikely to Change History – DW – 03/12/2021'.

83 - Press, 'Serbia Cancels EuroPride amid Rightwing Threats, Says President'.

84 - Stojanovic, 'Serbian Pride Condemns President's Vow to Veto Law on Same Sex Unions'.

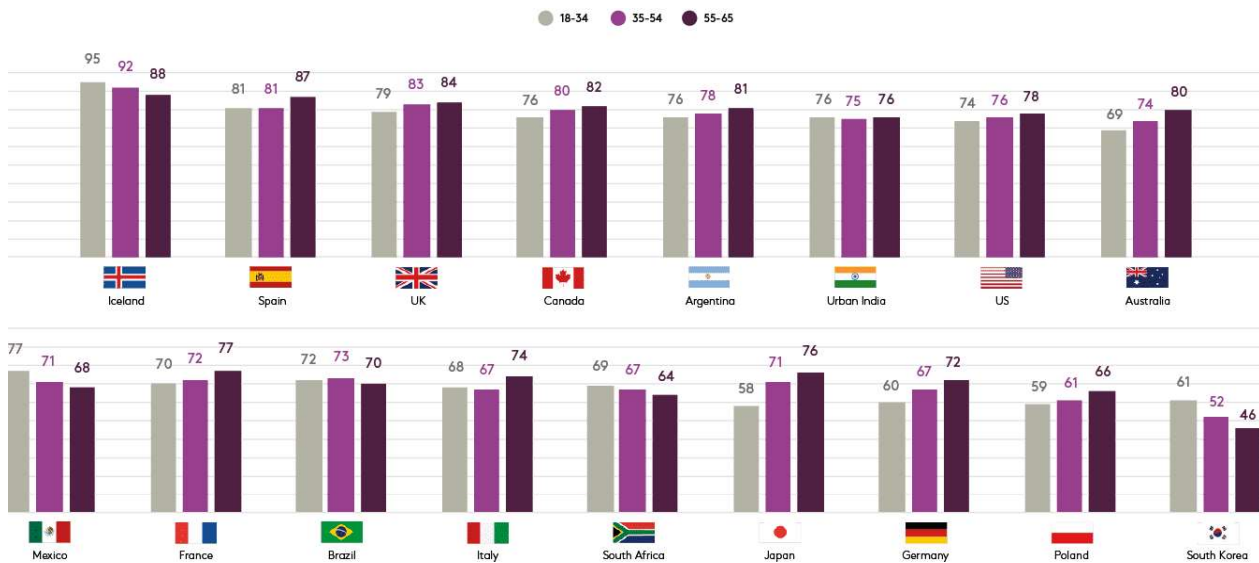


Photo: International Labour Organization

Those cases illustrate that even if there are LGBTQI+ people in high positions in a party, it does not make the party tolerant, welcoming, and diverse. Their successful LGBTQI+ politicians are more of the exception than the rule and we cannot assume that the principles of diversity and inclusion permeate the whole of the party or that common LGBTQI+ people feel truly welcome into those parties. That is, having LGBTQI+ people in higher political positions or even having an official LGBTQI+ group in the party does not necessarily entail that the party's policies are at all following DEI values or that there is true diversity in the party.

This is because of such discrepancies that only getting the numbers of LGBTQI+ party members or politicians does not tell the full story. Consequently, the role of party decision-makers is less to focus on random individual stories and career paths, but rather to ensure that the atmosphere and basic structure of the party in general are fair and welcoming to all. Thus, in order to have a clear picture of the actual state of the party structure it is less of a priority to take stock of LGBTQI+ individuals' experiences in the party's system, and more to gain some true insight into the attitudes of the party's majority towards LGBTQI+ party members, staff and politicians.

If those attitudes show certain levels of prejudice, distrust, and bias, decision-makers can infer that the idea of diversity in the party is in danger and are able to take action. Also, identifying specific pain points helps party decision-makers to target their policies better and more effectively.



Tools like the Reykjavik Leadership show the societal attitudes to accept women in leadership. The higher the rank the more acceptance. This graphic shows the information from G20 countries in 2022 where it's seen that younger citizens are the ones opposing the most to traditional non male leadership. Measures like these can help organisations to better understand if lack of diversity is a problem of cultural management.

Thus, the advantage of focusing on the party members' attitudes is manyfold, such as:

- It is easier to measure and process;
- It lays the foundation for effective policies;
- It creates a dialogue within the entire party.

The last point is important. Creating a truly diverse liberal party is not only the concern of party decision-makers and LGBTQI+ people. In order to succeed in this endeavor, it needs to be the concern of the entirety of the party. This is why it is crucial to measure, understand, and take into account the current attitudes of each party member in order to achieve meaningful change and a truly diverse party.

4. DATA COLLECTION IN PRACTICE

The chapter introduces more practical considerations when it comes to LGBTQI+ data collection for political parties. It emphasises that the crucial first step of data collection is to have clearly set goals and objectives and advises always to determine the metrics of data collection accordingly. It argues that in the case of liberal parties, the goal for LGBTQI+ data collection is twofold: firstly, to measure whether the composition of party membership resembles diversity in the general population, and secondly, to enable internal regulations that are fair for LGBTQI+ people by measuring the general attitudes towards them in the party.

The second part of the chapter argues that the best method of generating data for political parties on the party members' attitudes toward LGBTQI+ individuals is self-administered, anonymous online surveys, taken in the form of questionnaires. The last part of the chapter outlines the necessary elements of a great survey and lists several considerations that guide the survey planning and assessing process.

4.1. Setting clear goals as the first step

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, it is essential to have a clear and concise idea of what insights the organisation attempts to gain through data collection. (85) That is to say, data collection should always be derived from its ultimate goal: what do we want to achieve with the data? As a consequence, data collection must always start only after having a clearly defined goal.

This approach focusing on the goals of data collection has dual benefits: this way organisations ensure to only collect data that will indeed be used, something that is strongly suggested by expert guidance, and at the same time they are able to clearly communicate to their respondents the reasons and purposes of data collection, (86) thus gaining their trust and ensuring higher disclosure rates. (87, 88) This point, namely that organisations have a responsibility to only collect information that will be used (89) to target DEI initiatives, is discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

Conversely, if the initiators do not clearly define the purpose of data collection, it might both lead to uncertainty on the part of the initiators and mistrust from the respondents. Such self-serving and aimless data collection is a mistake committed too frequently, leading to inefficiency, inconsistency, biases, and inaccuracy.

86 - Great Britain. Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Collecting Information on Gender Identity'. 15-16.

87 - Norman, 'Data on Diversity in the Workplace'.

88 - 'Improving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Starts with Good Data'.

89 - Great Britain. Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Collecting Information on Gender Identity'.

These are all stumbling blocks that must be avoided in the case of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs. This is why it is important to always be focused with a clear purpose in mind (90) and let the study aim to dictate what is asked in the process of data collection. (91) In short, experts suggest managing and treating DEI data in the same way one would manage, for instance, budgeting data, with all the relevant planning, feedback, and accountability processes. (92)

One other common mistake with DEI initiatives is that they tend to be defensive in nature. This means that they frequently target winning the good opinion of third parties, or at least focus on deflecting external or internal accusations of intolerance and unfairness. In the case of political parties such opinionators would either be the general public, the press, or internal critics. (93)

At the same time, one of the earlier mentioned external benefits of successful DEI initiatives is that liberal political parties might gain credibility with their voters while strengthening their links to their LGBTQI+ party members. While this benefit is important, to only focus on this beneficial aspect when planning DEI initiatives would be misguided. (94) This is because DEI initiatives require a true commitment to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to ensure that data-driven actions truly and effectively target the real issues of LGBTQI+ members. (95) Avoiding bad press is a misleading goal, as it does not address the main issues and difficulties that underrepresented groups face. Thus, they are incapable of bringing meaningful change, as well as they might invoke the mistrust of respondents and lead to inauthentic surveys and questionable data collection practices.

Thus, the first step of any data collection project is to clearly define the goal: what is it that we want to achieve by getting all that data? This publication argues that collecting and processing data on party members' attitudes toward their fellow LGBTQI+ members has a twofold goal:

- 1.To provide a metric to the decision-makers on the social composition of party membership and its resemblance to the population;
- 2.Promoting internal regulations to 'break the glass ceiling' for minorities by measuring the general attitudes towards them.

The first goal implies that it is important for liberal political parties to maintain some links with the general population including their voters and supporters. It is based on two, related assumptions: that diversity and inclusion attract more members, and parties that are more inclusive of their members' preferences are better able to attract

90 - Norman, 'Data on Diversity in the Workplace'.

91 - Badgett, 'Best Practices for Asking Questions about Sexual Orientation on Surveys'. 7.

92 - Chilazi and Bohnet, 'How to Best Use Data to Meet Your DE&I Goals'.

93 - Llopis, 'How To Measure Inclusion'.

94 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 7.

95 - Pasterny.7.

and retain members who are ideologically aligned with the party, and that diverse parties, in general, engage better with the public. (96)

To underpin those assumptions, it is necessary to decide how we see the role of parties in modern democracies. Although some political theorists are wary of the very existence of political parties in democracies, the most notable example being the founders of the United States, most contemporary political thinkers agree that parties are essential parts of modern democracies. They argue that parties have a vital role in ensuring efficiency in the legislative area in modern democracies by coordinating the preferences and consequent votes of their supporters. (97) As Stokes puts it in his article on the assessment of political parties in democracies, political parties 'give more effective expression to the people's interests and solidarities.' (98)

This is why it is important to make explicit what identities, interests, and preferences are given expression in the party system. Stokes highlights the following:

' The size of a party system (how many parties regularly compete in elections) and its scope (which cleavages and identities are politicised, which are not)– have profound normative implications. If parties convey the preferences, opinions, and interests of constituencies to government, then the expression of societal interests or their suppression via the party system will critically influence the quality of democracy. ' (99)

This is why a successful democratic party needs to be responsive to the needs and preferences of its supporters. (100) However, studies show that one of the main challenges for contemporary political parties is that the social composition of party members is increasingly out of touch with the general population. (101) That is, most researchers agree that party members in parliamentary democracies tend not to be representative of the party's supporters and voters. This is because party members tend to be older, wealthier, and better educated than the general population, as well as the percentage of party members identifying as males is higher than in the general voting population. (102)

While those differences unfortunately exist between party members and the general voting population, a 2020 study found a positive correlation between enhanced inclusiveness and better representation. According to the study, parties that offer greater political benefits to their members have lower ideological and demographic disparities between members and other party supporters. (103)

96 - Bale, Tim, Paul Webb, and Monica Poletti. *Footsoldiers 'Political Party Membership in the 21st Century.'*

97 - Stokes, 'Political Parties and Democracy'. 245.

98, 99 - Stokes. 246.

100 - Dahl, *Polyarchy*.1.

101 - Goyal and Sells, 'Women and Party Building'.

102, 103 - *The Consequences of Membership Incentives...* - Susan Achury, Susan E Scarrow, Karina Kosiara-Pedersen, Emilie van Haute, 2020'.

4.2. Surveys as the most suitable methods for data collection

The chapter reviews expert guidance on collecting LGBTQI+ data and concludes that in order to maintain higher disclosure rates and a non-coercive approach, the best method for data collection in terms of diversity data for political parties is self-administered, anonymous surveys. The chapter lists the characteristics of great surveys, specifically targeting attitudinal and behavioural issues that might lower disclosure and completion rates. The chapter argues for anonymous, short, easily understandable, succinct and engaging online surveys, self-administered in the privacy of the respondents' home.

4.2.1 A case for self-administered anonymous surveys

The first and foremost task of an organisation committed to monitoring LGBTQI+ diversity is to ensure having as much quality data on the actual state of affairs as possible. In order to do so, the challenge is to identify the best method to collect such data. This needs to be an achievable method that conforms to legal requirements and ensures both high disclosure rates and quality data.

There are some more widely applied techniques, mostly used in the corporate context, that attempt to achieve these aims. The most widespread method for such data collection is the use of forms and questionnaires. Typically, companies concerned with diversity data collection focus on asking job candidates or employees to fill in forms supplying their sensitive data. (104)

A comprehensive guide based on a 2011 study about collecting information on gender identity, compiled by Great Britain's Equality and Human Rights Commission, argues for the use of paper or online forms in these cases. According to the experts' opinion, this is the format most suitable when inquiring about sensitive data because it offers 'a greater degree of privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and avoid embarrassment for respondent and researcher'. That is, paper and online forms are more private than interviews or focus group discussions and provide an environment in which more forthcoming answers, and as a consequence, higher quality data is expected. (105)

In the corporate world, one of the most frequently used methods to map out member satisfaction is also that of anonymous forms and surveys. The general benefit of these forms in the case of LGBTQI+ diversity data is that they can give enough information about the number, percentage, and experience of LGBTQI+ members of the organisation.

104 - Norman, 'Data on Diversity in the Workplace'.

105 - Great Britain, Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Collecting Information on Gender Identity'.



They are also suited to map out overall attitudes towards disadvantaged groups. In short, anonymous forms are useful for at the same time outlining a picture of the LGBTQI+ people's experiences in the organisation, and can also highlight the attitudes of the organisation as a whole towards disadvantaged groups and the organisation's true commitment to equality and diversity. (106)

As of the content of such forms and questionnaires, LGBTQI+ diversity falls under the category of DEI goals, and as such, it is most commonly measured by following the same logic that is applied when measuring DEI generally.

Most DEI surveys conducted in the business environment are based on employee feedback. (107) One of the common tools is the Gartner model which builds on qualitative interviews of many DEI executives, as well as academic research. This model considers seven dimensions when asking for feedback on the fulfilment of DEI values in an organisation. The dimensions are fair treatment, integrating differences, decision-making, psychological safety, trust, belonging and diversity. (108) Based on these, the Gartner Inclusion Index uses seven statements and employees are asked to rate how much those statements apply to their organisations. The seven statements of the Gartner Inclusion Index, meant to map out how inclusive an organisation is, are as follows:

1. 'Fair treatment: Employees at my organisation who help the organisation achieve its strategic objectives are rewarded and recognized fairly.
 2. Integrating differences: Employees at my organisation respect and value each other's opinions.
 3. Decision making: Members of my team fairly consider ideas and suggestions offered by other team members.
 4. Psychological safety: I feel welcome to express my true feelings at work.
 5. Trust: Communication we receive from the organisation is honest and open.
 6. Belonging: People in my organisation care about me.
 7. Diversity: Managers at my organisation are as diverse as the broader workforce.'
- (109)

The Gartner Index is less about numbers and more about inclusion and equity. Still, as it is mentioned in the previous chapter, besides questions related to the organisation's perceived inclusivity, it is also important to have a clear picture of diversity defined in terms of numbers. Those two aspects taken together enable an organisation to take the steps necessary to implement the values of DEI. (110)

106 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 10.

107 - Romansky et al., 'How to Measure Inclusion in the Workplace'.

108 - Romansky et al.

109 - 'How to Measure Diversity, Equity and Inclusion'.

110 - Romansky et al., 'How to Measure Inclusion in the Workplace'.

Self-administered surveys are able to supply that information. When measuring respondents' attitudes, it is critical to identify any otherwise overlooked inconsistencies and possible areas and pockets of exclusion and intolerance throughout the organisation. In this way, based on the survey results, decision-makers are well equipped to take necessary action, while considering the respondent's perceptions regarding the organisation, and at the same time identifying inconsistencies and making meaningful comparisons. (111)

4.2.2 How to build a great survey?

So the main question is the following: how to build a great, effective survey that can provide all the above? UX researchers have long debated that issue. Annie Steele at Stripe outlines a number of practically useful principles that ensure effective survey design, resulting in better products and enhanced user relationships. Her main principles are the following:

1. Great surveys increase the number of respondents both in terms of starting and completing the survey;
2. Great surveys ensure that survey data is easily translated into meaningful information and insight;
3. Great surveys guarantee valid and accurate data analysis;
4. Great surveys support survey-based decisions;
5. Great surveys enhance the public image of the survey's initiatives. (112)

For political parties, whose main business is participating in different elections, it is interesting to note that the above principles of great surveys are rather similar to the principles that are applied in the case of e-voting or internet voting in elections. That is, to build an effective online survey, one follows similar principles to the ones that govern the building of i-voting systems, such as:

1. Single submission: each member can submit a single response
2. Secrecy: members cannot be connected to their response
3. Validation: results can be confirmed by independent parties
4. Non-coercion: it should not be possible to coerce a member into a specific choice
5. Real submissions: no fake submissions enter the system.

These concerns mostly refer to technical challenges that we discuss in detail in Chapter 4.

111 - Romansky et al.

112 - Steele, 'Survey Design'.

113 - Norman, 'Data on Diversity in the Workplace'.

114 - Nicks et al., 'Encouraging Sexual Orientation Disclosure in Recruitment Research Report'.

In the case of LGBTQI+ data, a great survey is one that ensures high disclosure rates as well as provides quality data providing a sound basis for later analysis and is able to ground meaningful policies. It is because in the case of surveys targeting sensitive data, such as LGBTQI+ questions, low disclosure rates are the most salient issue. To counteract this, a widely used technique is transparent communication about the aim of data collection. Explicitly communicating about the aims of data collection, the way data will be used, and the ways in which such data informs the organisation's future politics is all meant to ensure more trust and higher rates of voluntary data disclosure. (113)

However, according to an above-mentioned 2019 study, addressing the respondents' negative attitudes towards data collection, such as mistrust and wariness about the possible mishandling of their sensitive data, can not be directly linked to higher disclosure rates. That is, attempts to alleviate those negative attitudes might not lead to a direct increase in the rates of disclosure. (114)

According to researchers, a better option would be to target possible behavioural barriers. These are issues such as the respondents being unaware that they had not disclosed yet, their confusion about how to complete the form, or their perceived lack of time to do so. When researchers attempted to target these behavioural barriers, they perceived more success. They used methods such as succinct and transparent communication about the practicalities of data disclosure, clear guides to action, and easily accessible forms, and overall, they attempted to make the process of disclosure as easy as possible. As a result, they experienced a marked 30% increase in disclosure rates. (115)

Besides targeting behavioural barriers, research also demonstrates that it is best to conduct the surveys anonymously. According to a 2007 survey, half of the respondents were willing to declare their 'trans' status in an anonymous questionnaire, but only half of them did so when the survey asked for their names as well. This highlights why privacy and anonymity are essential when asking about sensitive information. (116) Most researchers also agree that it is best to let the respondents fill in the forms in their homes, as it ensures the maximum level of privacy and security, (117) but at least, they advise to ensure that the questions are posed in self-administered paper or computer-based questionnaires. (118)

In the case of computer-based online surveys, although they are more convenient and ensure even higher levels of privacy, there is another added difficulty. They, as opposed to paper-based surveys, have to compete with the overall noise of the digital space. In the case of political parties, where party members are the target audience of the data collection, this issue is even more pressing.

115 - 'Improving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Starts with Good Data'.

116 - Great Britain. Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Collecting Information on Gender Identity'.

117 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 22.

118 - Badgett, 'Best Practices for Asking Questions about Sexual Orientation on Surveys'. iii.

This is because party members are not like full-time employees at a company: they cannot be obligated to participate in surveys. This is why the party has a better focus on offering incentives for completing surveys rather than attempting to force its members to disclose.

As it was outlined above, the best incentive in the case of such surveys is transparency, which, as a result, must be even more pronounced in this case. This means both communicational transparency regarding the goals and purposes of the survey and technological transparency. As of the first, party members in robust political parties are united by a common purpose. Clearly underlining and emphatically communicating how the survey helps this common purpose is one of the best tools to boost conversion. The lack of any financial or other restrictive incentives satisfies the above-mentioned non-coercion principle, just like in the case of voting.

The technological transparency aspect is just as important. The user should be able to check their submissions and check the data privacy laws at any time. This requires a technical solution that we deal with in a later part of this publication. Here it is important to highlight that the technological aspects have to satisfy the need for secrecy and real submissions.

As a consequence of all the above, we maintain that the most effective method for LGBTQI+ data collection is self-completed, anonymous online surveys. Using those makes for an effective method that also implies lower costs. They are private, and if designed well, are very convenient for the user.

In short, transparency boosts trust, and trust overall is the ultimate key metric. Trust can be also gained from principle #1 single submission and #3 validation.

4.2.3 Assessing the survey

When devising online surveys, some general considerations guide the overall process: the best online surveys shall be short, easy, and engaging. In the following, we explore those guidelines in more detail.

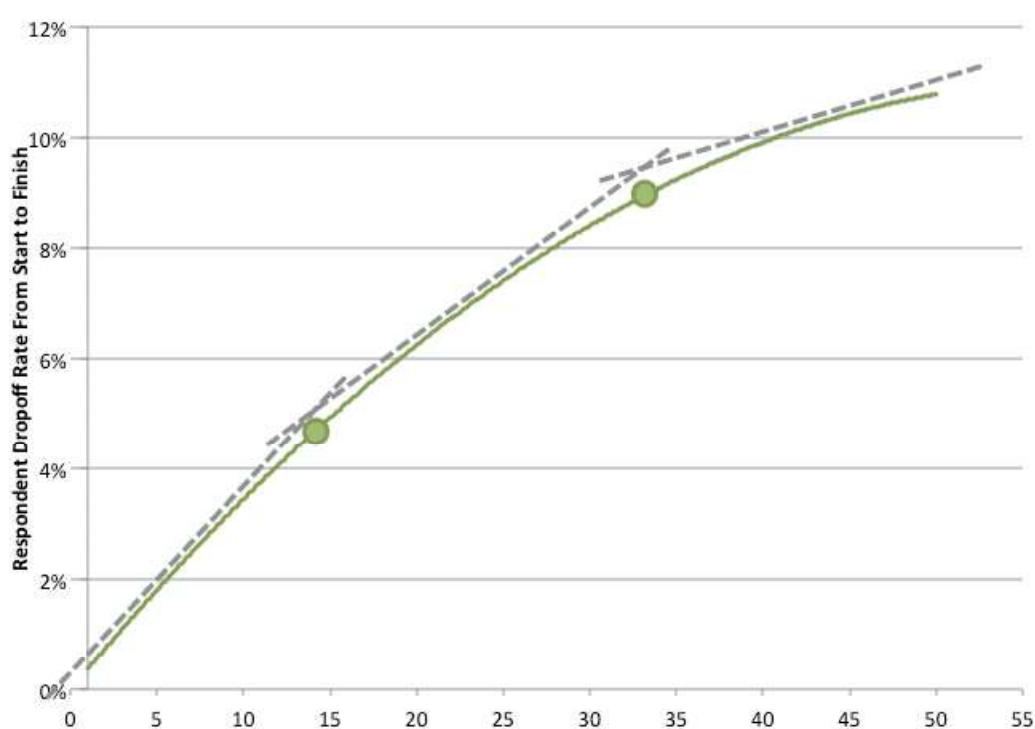
- **Keep the survey short**

Keeping surveys short, while always preferable, is especially important in the case of voluntary respondents, such as members of a political party. That is, respondents of these surveys are not obligated to disclose their answers, they are in essence doing the party a favour by cooperating. This is why it is important to respect their time and not to ask too many questions.



This is a good policy in general: keeping the survey as short, concise, and focused as possible leads both to more fully completed surveys and more quality answers. This is because longer surveys can lead to respondent fatigue and lower completion rates. According to a 2009-2010 study, analysing the drop-off rates of 100 000 random surveys, data clearly shows that longer surveys directly lead to higher drop-off rates. The study found that the most pronounced increase in drop-off rate occurs with each additional question of up to 15 questions. After that, up to 35 questions, the drop-off rate is lower than in the case of the first 15 questions. After 35 questions, additional questions do not have a substantive effect on drop-off rates. (119)

This is illustrated by the following graph:



Graph 1: Survey completion rates compared to the number of survey questions (120)

Even though shorter surveys tend to get better completion rates, there are cases where just a couple of questions are not enough to derive valuable data. What is important to keep in mind when optimising for completed survey responses is to make the survey as short as possible and to always calculate the incremental value of each additional question in view of the possible increase in drop-off rates. (121) In general, if feasible then it is best to limit the survey to around 6-7 questions.

The necessary time to complete a survey also has an impact on the final result. According to research, there is no linear relationship between the number of questions in a survey and the time respondents spend on filling out the survey. That is, if a survey has more questions, the respondents are more inclined to skim through it and on average spend less time on answering each question.

The below table shows this affect, based on numbers taken from the above-mentioned survey:

Question Count	Average Seconds Spent Per Question	Total Survey Completion Times
1	75	1 min 15 sec
2	40	2 min
3-10	30	2-5 min
11-15	25	5-7 min
16-25	21	7-9 min
26-30	19	9-10 min

Table 1: Average seconds spent per question and total survey completion times by question numbers (122)

Respondents spending less time on each answer and giving less thorough answers could lead to less quality data. According to the above data, respondents spend half the average time on surveys containing more than 30 questions than on ones with less than 30 questions. (123) Thus, as a rule of thumb, it is best to aim for surveys that take no more than 5-10 minutes to complete. This way one can expect more thoughtful answers and, as a consequence, higher-quality data. This also means a maximum of 11-30 questions per survey.

When outlining the survey questions, it is best to assess in each case whether one needs that specific information. If there is any doubt about the necessity and potential use of the information, it is always best to refrain from asking the question.

- **Keep the survey easy**

In general, the best surveys use clear and simple language. They operate with questions that are easily understandable and avoid misunderstandings. To ensure this, it is better if specific jargon, complex wording and leading questions are altogether left out of the survey. Having any of those in a survey could lead to biased responses, and, as a consequence, unreliable data. Thus, when wording the forms, it is advisable to use clear, transparent, easily understandable language. This makes the forms more inclusive and accessible for all and thus, brings in a wider array of experiences. (124)

122, 123 - 'How Long Should a Survey Be?' - zotero.org

124 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 19.

The main consideration is to make the process as easy as possible in order to maintain higher disclosure rates. As a consequence, appropriate language and format of the forms and questionnaires have vital importance. This is even more important in surveys dealing with sensitive topics, which is typical with DEI initiatives. This is why, according to research on LGBTQI+ data collection, applying appropriate language in surveys, forms, and questionnaires is a good way to raise disclosure rates. (125)

Thus, it is essential to avoid inappropriate and derogatory language at all times, as those might lead to lower disclosure rates, or even offend the participants. The main consideration is to make the respondents filling out these forms feel comfortable and secure. (126)

- **Keep the survey engaging**

A general rule of thumb for creating engaging surveys is to treat the survey as a conversation. That is, the best surveys start with general, easy questions, requiring straightforward and light answers resembling small talk in a conversation. Then the survey can incrementally move towards deeper and more personal topics. Following the logic of natural conversations when outlining the survey, the more sensitive topics are better kept towards the second part, where some level of rapport, trust, and engagement is already established. (127)

The right placement of questions is especially important in the case of surveys asking questions about sensitive topics. In these cases, the formatting and placement of questions can encourage higher disclosure rates and more accurate answers. In general, experts recommend placing questions regarding sexual identity and orientation at the end of the survey's 'Demographics' portion. (128) This has the additional advantage of clustering the demographic attributes, such as age, gender, location, etc. together, thus making the future categorisation and segmentation of the respondents easier and facilitating later data analysis by different demographic subgroups. However, the specific placement of these questions is always best tailored according to the goals of each survey.

The use and placement of free-answer questions pose another issue. Although those types of answers can offer useful, more detailed information, they have several drawbacks as well. For instance, they are the hotbed for data protection violations, they are significantly harder to analyse compared to multiple-choice answers, and extend the time to complete the survey.

Experts advise against including more than one free-answer question in a survey and suggest placing that question at the very end.

125 - Norman, 'Data on Diversity in the Workplace'.

126 - Pasterny, Do Ask, Do Tell: Capturing Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Globally. 19.

127 - 'Survey Best Practices & Design Guidelines'. - zotero.org

128 - Badgett, 'Best Practices for Asking Questions about Sexual Orientation on Surveys'. 21.

This is because free-response answers are harder to fill in, especially in the case of online surveys that are frequently taken on mobile devices. When people are asked to type words in a box, they are more likely to drop out of the survey. (129) But by the end of the survey, respondents are more invested and have already placed more trust in the survey, thus, they are more likely to answer one free-response question.

Although increasing disclosure rates and completed surveys is a priority during survey planning, it is still strongly recommended to allow the respondent to opt out of the survey at any point. As it was mentioned above, coercion has no place in such surveys. As a consequence, none of the questions on the survey should be mandatory.

Keeping all that in mind, survey administrators are advised to pay special attention to skip patterns. Experts point out that this is especially important in case of longer or more complicated surveys. The aim is to devise the survey in such a way that these patterns do not lead respondents to unintentionally skip relevant questions on sexual and gender identity. Another pitfall to avoid is unintentionally organising questions in such a sequence in the skip pattern that might lead to biased answers. (130) So, while it is important to let the respondents skip parts of the survey or opt out of questions altogether, at the same time special attention must be paid to the way it is achieved to protect the coherence of data.

The last important step in order to increase conversion rates is to describe in detail not just the goals of the survey but the use of the results as well. A best practice also involves the immediate and automated publishing of the aggregated results of the submissions.

5. DATA STORAGE IN PRACTICE

Political parties face similar and specific challenges in data management due to the fact that they are closer to power in democracies than any other organisations outside the government. Various governmental organisations (131) see this and try to warn the parties of the biggest threats. Based on these guidelines and our personal experience as the Chief Data Officer in a political party, a political party faces three predominant challenges (132) regarding the storage of sensitive data: 1) heightened vulnerability to cyberattacks, 2) strict compliance with data protection laws, and 3) the management of internal threats. While these challenges are somewhat universal across various types of organisations, they take on unique characteristics in the political realm. Let's discuss these in detail.

129 - Steele, 'Survey Design'.

130 - Badgett, 'Best Practices for Asking Questions about Sexual Orientation on Surveys'. 22-23.

131 - <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-political-parties>

132 - <https://rm.coe.int/guidelines-on-data-protection-and-election-campaigns-en/1680a5ae72> p. 20-21.



- **Heightened Vulnerability to Cyberattacks:**

Political organisations are often high-profile targets for cyberattacks, more so than many other types of organisations. This is due to the sensitive and potentially impactful nature of the information they handle, including strategies, internal communications, and personal data of members, donors, and affiliates. Like in any organisation, these attacks can take the form of hacking, phishing, or malware, but the potential consequences in the political sphere – such as influencing election outcomes or public opinion – can be particularly severe. Implementing robust cybersecurity measures, therefore, becomes not just a technical issue but a cornerstone of their operational integrity.

- **Strict Compliance with Data Protection Laws:**

Political entities must navigate complex legal frameworks governing the use and storage of personal data, much like any other organisation. However, the data they handle often has greater sensitivity, involving political opinions, donation records, and affiliations, which are often more rigorously protected under laws like the GDPR or CCPA. The stakes for non-compliance are high, as violations can lead to significant legal penalties and damage to public trust. This challenge is akin to what healthcare or financial institutions face, where data sensitivity demands stringent compliance measures.

- **Management of Internal Threats**

The risk posed by insiders – whether through malicious intent or inadvertent errors – is a significant concern for political organisations, as it is for any organisation dealing with sensitive data. However, in the political context, the motivations for internal breaches can be more varied, including ideological disagreements or attempts to influence or sabotage political processes. Ensuring data integrity and preventing unauthorised access requires not just technical safeguards but also a strong organisational culture of security and awareness. This involves regular training, clear policies, and a vigilant approach to access control and monitoring, similar to practices in corporate or other non-profit sectors.

The threats clearly point out that a political party faces similar challenges in regard to data protection as governments face with e-voting, especially when it comes to sensitive data. This can be summarised by the need to simultaneously fulfill two antagonistic properties: integrity and privacy. (133) The sensitive data shall not be linked to the person but the results must be verifiable, the participation shall be non-coercive, and submissions shall be real and single, yet the results should be verifiable (see 4.2.2.).

133 – E-voting system evaluation based on the Council of Europe recommendations: Helios Voting

5.1. Overcoming the challenges

Managing and mitigating risks requires organisational and technological solutions.

From an organisational standpoint, managing and mitigating risks associated with storing sensitive data in a political organisation involves a combination of policy-making, training, and internal culture development. Firstly, it's essential to establish clear data governance policies that define how data is handled, who has access to it, and how long it is retained. These policies should be regularly reviewed and updated to remain compliant with changing data protection laws. Training and awareness programs are crucial in educating staff and volunteers about the importance of data security and the practices required to maintain it. This training should cover areas like recognising phishing attempts, proper handling of sensitive information, and understanding legal obligations regarding data protection. Creating a culture of security within the organisation is also vital. This can be fostered by encouraging open communication about security concerns and promoting a sense of collective responsibility for protecting sensitive data. Regular internal audits and checks can help ensure that policies are being followed and identify areas for improvement.

On the technological front, protecting sensitive data in a political organisation involves database pseudonymisation as well as implementing and maintaining robust cybersecurity measures.

5.1.1. Data pseudonymisation

Data pseudonymisation is a data management technique primarily aimed at enhancing privacy and security. (134) It involves modifying personal data so that individuals cannot be directly identified without additional information, typically held separately. This is achieved by replacing private identifiers with pseudonyms or artificial identifiers.

The primary goal of pseudonymisation is to protect individuals' privacy, particularly in the context of data processing and storage. By separating direct identifiers (like names, addresses, or social security numbers) from the data, the risk of harm or privacy invasion from data breaches is significantly reduced. If the pseudonymized data is compromised, it is much harder for unauthorised users to link the data back to specific individuals.

134 - Pseudonymization and impacts of Big (personal/anonymous) Data processing in the transition from the Directive 95/46/EC to the new EU General Data Protection Regulation

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In the context of legal and regulatory compliance, such as under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe, pseudonymization is highly encouraged. It's a technique that enables organisations to balance the dual needs of utilising data for business or research purposes while upholding privacy and security standards. (135)

The process typically involves substituting private identifiers with a pseudonym or code. For example, a name in a dataset might be replaced with a unique alphanumeric string. The original identifiers are kept separately and are protected with robust security measures. This separation ensures that re-identification without access to the linkage key is difficult, thus maintaining the confidentiality of the data subject.

The best software available for data pseudonymisation assessed by Joana Ferreira Marques and Jorge Bernardino are ARX, μ -Argus, SDCMicro, and Privacy Analytics Eclipse. (136)

5.1.2. Cybersecurity

Political parties are increasingly vulnerable to hacking and present tempting targets for foreign actors. Party leaders face a significant threat of online impersonation, especially if a hostile domestic or foreign group takes over their Facebook or Twitter accounts. The consequences of fraudulently impersonating a party leader or candidate are extremely serious. Consider the potential disorder that might occur if a foreign entity hijacked the prime minister's Twitter account.

As technology evolves, this threat is intensifying. The dangers of impersonation are growing with the advancement of "deep fake" technology. This technology involves the manipulation of audio and video to create highly convincing footage of political figures engaging in harmful acts or making harmful statements. The emergence of deep fakes is likely to make it increasingly difficult for voters to judge the authenticity of news or social media content. They might mistakenly believe fake videos or become sceptical of genuine ones, adversely affecting the quality of democratic discourse. (137)

135 - Et al

136 - Analysis of Data Anonymization Techniques <https://www.scitepress.org/Papers/2020/101423/101423.pdf>

137 - Elizabeth F. Judge and Michael Pal: Election Cyber Security Challenges for Canada <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep26129.5.pdf>

Cybersecurity measurements include deploying advanced security technologies like firewalls, anti-virus software, and intrusion detection systems to safeguard against external threats. Data encryption, both for data at rest and in transit, is critical to ensure that even if data is intercepted or accessed, it remains unreadable and secure. Access controls play a significant role; using technologies like multi-factor authentication (MFA) and role-based access control (RBAC) can prevent unauthorised access to sensitive information. Regularly backing up data and having a comprehensive disaster recovery plan in place ensures that the organisation can quickly recover from data loss events. Additionally, continuous monitoring of network and data activities through automated tools can help in detecting and responding to potential security incidents in real-time. Emphasising technological agility is also important, which means staying abreast of and adapting to the latest security technologies and threats.

5.2. Why is data protection critical for political parties?

Besides the legal obligations, data protection for political parties is especially critical in the context of public relations, for several reasons.

Trust and credibility is one of the key assets for a political party and members and supporters trust political parties with their personal information, often including sensitive data like political opinions, donation records, and contact details. If a party fails to protect this data, it risks losing the trust of its members, supporters, and the general public.

From the aspect of reputation management, data breaches or mishandling of data can lead to significant reputational damage. In the political arena, where perception plays a significant role, such incidents can be exploited by opponents and can negatively impact public opinion. Effective data protection helps avoid scandals or negative press that can arise from data mismanagement.

By adhering to strong data protection standards, political parties demonstrate their commitment to responsible governance. This sets a positive example and aligns with the public expectation that political leaders should be at the forefront of protecting citizen rights, including privacy.

In summary, effective data protection is vital for political parties in the context of public relations because it builds trust, manages reputation, ensures legal compliance, enhances campaign effectiveness, prevents misuse, demonstrates responsible leadership, and fosters long-term supporter relationships. In an era where data is a key asset, its protection is not just a legal requirement but a fundamental component of a political party's relationship with its members and the public at large.



6. EXTRACTING INFORMATION FROM DATA

After the party successfully conducts the data collection in alignment with the aspects listed above, the next step is to analyse the data. With the right measurements – especially pseudonymisation – the analysis shall not carry any risks in regard to data protection.

As mentioned above, setting a clear goal for data collection is the first as well as a very important step. Let's rewind to the goals:

- 1.To provide a metric to the decision-makers on the social composition of party membership and its resemblance to the population;
- 2.Promoting internal regulations in 'breaking the glass ceiling' for minorities by measuring the general attitudes towards them.

6.1. Providing metrics to decision makers

Goal #1 aims to show the distinction between the party's social composition and the composition of the population in general. This implies a comparison but this should be handled very carefully. As Badgett highlights in chapter 7. Best Practices for Analyses of Sexual Orientation Data

'Collecting data on sexual orientation is obviously an important step, but data must also be analysed before the knowledge gained from any such data will be revealed. Responsible analyses of sexual orientation must be cognizant of several important factors that have been observed to potentially distort or misrepresent important nuances in these data.' (138)

Badgett emphasises that the best research requires several important practices, including the careful consideration of differences among non-heterosexual responses; a thorough understanding of how survey methodologies can affect reliability and validity of responses; separate subgroup analysis of outcomes and appreciation for how reported findings can be used in the broader socio-political and policy contexts of sexual

orientation issues; a clear understanding of time frames and temporal issues in analyses of sexual orientation; and a recognition of potential sources of measurement error common when considering small segments of a population. (139)

This approach can be broken down into various details. First, when feasible, it is advisable to examine bisexual individuals separately from those who identify as lesbian or gay. Individuals who do not answer questions about their sexual orientation, or who indicate "I don't know" or choose "other," should not be grouped with lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) individuals. It is important to recognize and analyse the varying impacts of sexual orientation on different genders. The methodology of survey administration should be taken into account when interpreting results, as it may influence the answers given.

Assessment of responses to questions on sexual orientation should account for the context of the questions, such as their order within the survey, any instructions that might lead to questions being skipped, and how non-responses are handled. Responses to questions about sexual orientation are more likely to be affected by the tone set by preceding questions; if they are non-stigmatising, responses may differ significantly. In dealing with non-responses, it is crucial to consider overall patterns in the data rather than isolating single questions.

Be aware that responses from younger or older participants might vary due to a generational gap in the interpretation of questions that may not have been designed with their age group in mind. Within the LGBT community, white individuals often shape the perceived characteristics of the community due to their numerical dominance. Thus, when analysing data, it is important to explore differences among various racial and ethnic groups as long as the sample size is adequate.

Providing comparative behaviour rates from different demographic groups can contextualise whether certain behaviours are unusually common or rare among sexual minorities. The reliability of long-term studies should be considered in light of how different combinations of data collected over various time frames might affect sensitivity. Recent sexual activity can be a more accurate gauge of an individual's current sexual orientation than past behaviour. Therefore, when examining sexual behaviour and related outcomes, it is important to establish relevant time-based measures.

Finally, it is essential to be mindful of the potential for respondent errors within the general population that could result in incorrect classification of individuals into the minority sexual population. (140)

139 - Badgett et al. 38.

140 - Badgett et al. 43.

6.2. Promoting internal regulations in breaking the glass ceiling

DEI internal regulations are not included in this document but in order to come up with the best policies the organisations have to analyse the attitude measurements first. However, it is very important to be aware of the limitations of self-report measures of attitudes towards sexual orientation.

Self-report measures of attitudes towards sexual orientation have a number of limitations. First, they are susceptible to social desirability bias, meaning that respondents may answer questions in a way that they believe is socially acceptable, rather than in a way that reflects their true attitudes.

Second, self-report measures may not be able to capture all of the complex nuances of attitudes towards sexual orientation. For example, a person may hold positive attitudes towards LGBTQI+ in general, but still have negative attitudes towards specific LGBTQI+ groups, such as transgender people. Despite these limitations, self-report measures are still a valuable tool for assessing attitudes towards sexual orientation but it is important to keep in mind its limitations. (141)

In order to inform the development of a DEI plan, it is essential to proceed with a thorough analysis of the data collected after completing an extensive data collection effort to understand the DEI landscape of an organisation. This analysis should identify patterns, disparities, areas for improvement, and existing strengths within the organisation's DEI framework. For example, if the data reveals a lack of diversity in leadership positions, or if certain groups report feeling less included or equitably treated, these issues become focal points for action. The analysis should also take into account the nuances of different departments, teams, and roles, acknowledging that DEI is not a one-size-fits-all endeavour and can manifest differently across an organisation.

The DEI plan, based on the analysis, should set out a strategic approach to address the identified issues and leverage strengths. This strategy typically includes specific, actionable objectives aimed at promoting diversity, achieving equity, and fostering an inclusive culture. For instance, if the data indicates underrepresentation of certain groups, the plan might include targeted recruitment initiatives, mentorship programs, or partnerships with organisations that support underrepresented talent. Should there be findings of unequal access to professional development opportunities, the plan could introduce equitable training programs and transparent career progression paths.

141 - Ryan, W. S., & Blascovich, J. (2015). Measures of attitudes towards sexual orientation: Heterosexism, homophobia, and internalized stigma. In G. J. Boyle, D. H. Saklofske, & G. Matthews (Eds.), *Measures of personality and social psychological constructs* (pp. 719–751). Elsevier Academic Press.

The strategy should align with the broader business goals and values of the organisation, ensuring that DEI considerations are integrated into all aspects of operation and culture, rather than existing as a separate or peripheral effort. (142)

7. FINAL REMARKS

This research has developed a new method for measuring LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties. The proposed method uses internal data from political parties, such as surveys and focus group interviews, to assess attitudes toward LGBTQI+ party members. This data is then used to create a composite index of LGBTQI+ diversity for each party.

The findings of a pilot study using the proposed method showed that there was a significant difference in the level of LGBTQI+ diversity between the two political parties that participated in the study. The party with the higher score on the composite index was perceived as being more inclusive of LGBTQI+ people and had a higher level of support for LGBTQI+ rights among party members.

The findings of this research have a number of implications for political parties and future research.

- **Implications for political parties**

The findings of this research suggest that political parties should collect data on LGBTQI+ diversity on a regular basis. This data can be used to identify areas where parties need to improve and to develop targeted interventions to increase LGBTQI+ representation.

Political parties can also use the composite index of LGBTQI+ diversity to benchmark their performance against other parties. This can help parties to identify areas where they are falling behind and to set targets for improvement.

- **Implications for future research**

Future research should aim to collect data on LGBTQI+ diversity from a wider range of political parties and in a wider range of countries. This would allow for a more comprehensive assessment of the level of LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties globally.

Future research should also explore the relationship between LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties and a range of other factors, such as party ideology, party structure, and the level of LGBTQI+ acceptance in the wider society.

Overall, this research has made a significant contribution to our understanding of LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties. The proposed method for measuring LGBTQI+ diversity is a reliable and feasible tool that can be used by political parties and researchers to track progress over time and to identify areas where improvement is needed.

In addition to the above, here are some other potential implications of this research:

- Political parties may be more likely to adopt policies that support LGBTQI+ people if they perceive that their electorate is increasingly diverse.
- LGBTQI+ people may be more likely to vote for political parties that are perceived as being more inclusive.
- Political parties with a more diverse membership may be better able to understand and address the needs of LGBTQI+ people.
- Researchers may use the proposed method to study the relationship between LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties and a range of other factors, such as political corruption, democratic governance, and economic development.

Overall, this research has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of LGBTQI+ diversity in political parties and its implications for democracy and society as a whole. ●



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MEASURING **DIVERSITY** IN LIBERAL ORGANISATIONS

RAINBOW PLATFORM
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We are witnessing a surge in anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric which attempts to oversimplify complex issues like individual freedom and self-determination. In many locations, what was formerly merely rhetoric has become real governing policies.

Many political parties need to use diversity as a strategic tool to engage with wider audiences and to reach audiences disenchanted by politics. The first step is to measure how welcoming political organisations are toward diversity. Once this step is done, actions can be taken to transform our parties into representation hubs.

The Rainbow Platform is founded on the idea of the elevation of LGBTQI+ voices by creating role models who can inspire political engagement and change.



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