This guide gives you the basics of doing research using a scientific method. These materials were tested on two participatory action research projects conducted by, for, and with young people: Amplify and Generation Inclusion.
POPULAR EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Oxfam-Québec draws on the principles of popular education as an approach to learning, designed to help people outside academia look critically at their living conditions and change them from a social justice perspective. So go ahead and use this guide and do your own research!
1. **Explore the Topic**
   You are interested in and find out as much as you can about it. Look at a variety of reliable sources (but beware of fake news!). Gathering material on the topic helps you:

2. **Establish a Research Theme**
   and explore it in greater depth:
   - **Because...** It’s a topic you’re interested in.
   - **Because...** There isn’t any (or enough) solid knowledge on it.

3. **Formulate a Research Question**
   to help you explore your question. Your question needs to be clear, specific, objective, and realistic (given the time and resources you must answer it).

4. **Choose the Subjects of Your Research**: Who should you talk to? Where will you do your research? Which voices are being heard and which aren’t?

5. **Choose your Research Method**:
   - How will you conduct your investigations?
   - What sources of information will you use? (e.g., surveys, interviews, press reviews).
   - Can the method you’ve chosen answer your research question?
   - Is your method realistic, given the time and resources you have available?

6. **Produce your Materials**: survey questions, interview grids, and so forth.

7. **Do Your Research**.
   Get people to complete surveys, do your interviews, read, and all the rest.

8. **Analyze What You Found**.
   Watch for unconscious bias that could mess up how you interpret your data (that goes for all the steps in your research — question your choices!).

9. **Sum up the Conclusions of Your Research** in a synthesis.

10. **Spread the Word About What You Found!**
    Get your results to the people who matter with written reports, podcasts, articles, videos, cartoons, and anything else. Be creative — the sky’s the limit!

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**Read on for more ideas on how to carry out the steps above.**
1 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

EXPLORE THE TOPIC THAT INTERESTS YOU:

What topic are you wondering about?

What would you like to find out about it?

List all the questions you can think of about the topic here:

FORMULATE A RESEARCH QUESTION.

This is the question your investigation will answer. Make it clear and simple and make it yield measurable results.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT QUESTION?

Does your question relate to a particular current situation (in the media, in politics, etc.)? Why is the question important to you?

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS:

- Are clear, specific, and objective.
- Can realistically be researched.
- Begin with: “How is it that...?”,”To what extent...?”

THE NOT-QUIETE-SO-RIGHT QUESTIONS:

- Involve value judgements.
- Can’t realistically be dealt with.
2 RESEARCH METHOD

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW TO ANSWER YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION?

WHERE CAN YOU FIND OUT? ONLINE? SOMEWHERE ELSE?
Note the sources (websites, social media, newspapers, etc.) you want to look at:

WHICH METHODS (E.G., SURVEY, FOCUS GROUP, INTERVIEWS, VOX POPS) WILL GET YOU THE DATA YOU NEED?

WHO WILL YOU TALK TO TO COLLECT THE DATA YOU NEED?
Which people or groups will you contact?

How will you contact those people or groups?

How many people would you like to talk to? (Estimate)

RESOURCES NEEDED
List everything you need and decide whether your research strategy is realistic, given:
- The time available
- Your ability to travel
- Your equipment and technical skills
- Your budget
### PRODUCE A QUESTIONNAIRE

#### GUIDELINES & CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA CONFIDENTIALITY:</th>
<th>How will data be stored and used? You need to get consent to publish what people tell you.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WRITE AN INTRODUCTION:</td>
<td>Introduce the research team and project and estimate the time it takes to complete the questionnaire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO ANSWER YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION.</td>
<td>Decide on the TARGET POPULATION: Whose answers do you want? This will help you decide what sociodemographic data to collect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:</td>
<td>Only ask questions that you need the answers to. You don’t ask for personal information out of curiosity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:</td>
<td>Consider leaving demographic questions for last. Some people don’t want to give personal information. If such questions are at the end, you will already have most of the answers by the time they get to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give PEOPLE THE OPTION OF NOT ANSWERING A QUESTION, if necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw up FILTER QUESTIONS:</td>
<td>These are questions that save you from getting answers you don’t need by zeroing in on the target population and information you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use CLOSED QUESTIONS to get specific answers. Use OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS to get open-ended answers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER OF QUESTIONS:</td>
<td>Go from the simplest to the most complicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASK POSITIVE QUESTIONS:</td>
<td>Avoid negative ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON’T COMBINE QUESTIONS {2 IN 1}: These are questions with “and” or “or”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you use SCALES, make sure they ALL GO THE SAME WAY: Either from positive to negative OR from negative to positive. The direction doesn’t matter, as long it’s all the same.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever you use scales, the CHOICES OF ANSWERS must be BALANCED: Never have 2 in one direction and 3 in other. Doing so creates an automatic bias.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEST YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE, preferably on many people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITE A CONCLUSION:</td>
<td>Thank your respondents for taking part and give them a way to stay in touch with you to find out more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION</td>
<td>EXAMPLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>Dear Respondent, We are XXX and we are researching XXX. We would appreciate it if you could take our survey, which takes about XX minutes to complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA</td>
<td>Age, gender, place of residence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FILTER QUESTIONS</td>
<td>Are you currently employed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If yes, in which city/town do you work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If not, what was the city/town of your last job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOSED QUESTIONS</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed discrimination in hiring because of prejudice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS</td>
<td>Can you describe good practices for acting if you witness discriminatory situations in a hiring process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS</td>
<td>Do you have any comments to share?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOSING</td>
<td>Thank you for completing our survey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANALYZE THE RESULTS

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS
How many people completed the survey?
Who were they?
What are your initial findings?

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS
What specific things would you like to know?
How will you select your collected data to find out those things?
Are there datasets you’d like to compare?

Are there things you were unable to find out? If so, what? How did that affect your research?

PRESENT YOUR RESULTS
Regardless of the format you decide on for presenting your results (written report, video, audio, cartoon, etc.), here’s a suggestion of what to include:

-q RESEARCH DETAILS
  > An introduction to your research team and project
  > Research method and data (how, when, how many respondents)
  > General profile of the people who took part
  > Additional information (e.g., definitions of terms, study limitations)

-q KEY FINDINGS: List the main research results.

-q CONCLUSION: What are the most important takeaways from your research?

-q WAYS FORWARD: Suggest resources that might help with the problems observed.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GUIDES

Research Ethics: A Step-by-Step Guide
(2 pages), Oxfam Great Britain, 2020

Research Ethics: A Practical Guide
(16 pages), Oxfam Great Britain, 2020

Creating Killer Facts and Graphics
(5 pages), Oxfam Great Britain, 2012

WEBSITES

Amplify:
www.oxfam.qc.ca/en/initiative/quebec/amplify/

Inclusion Generation (French):
www.oxfam.qc.ca/generation-inclusion

Youth Policy Lab:
www.youthpolicylab.eu/en/

Youth Rex:
www.youthrex.com/
This document was developed by Oxfam-Québec as part of the Génération Inclusion project. The project has been carried out in partnership with: