Equality Impact Assessment – ESRC UK Census 2021/2 data call

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is committed to promoting equality and participation in all its activities, whether this is related to the work we do with our external stakeholders or whether this is related to our responsibilities as an employer. As a public body, we are also required to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations when making decisions and developing policies. To do this, it is necessary to understand the potential impacts of the range of internal and external activities on different groups of people.

What is an Equality Impact Assessment and why does UKRI use it?

When developing a new scheme, or considering changes to an existing one, UKRI will carry out an equality impact assessment to review how it may affect particular groups or individuals and will take the findings into account. We expect that very rarely our actions will create barriers to participation. The assessment may however flag issues that are not of UKRI's making but we will, where it is in our remit to do so, recommend actions and adjustments. Some impacts are not exclusive to the scheme or change that is being evaluated and need to be addressed throughout our organisation. In some cases we may not have enough expertise and we will consult with others.

Our leadership and building on good practice

It is our ambition to be recognised as a leader in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and to build on our record of achievements to date, following on from the RCUK, Innovate UK and HEFCE Action Plans. These Plans are updated from time to time and Equality Impact Assessments will help us to prioritise actions.

Current good practice that is relevant to the call includes our:

- Grant terms and conditions, including recognition for sick leave and all forms of parental leave
- EDI in Panel Meetings Guidance for all panel members.

There are multiple dimensions/aspects to this Equality Impact Assessment:

1) Ensuring that the eligibility criteria are clear and objectively justified
2) Ensuring that the submission, peer review and awarding processes reduce the potential for unintentional bias.
3) The identification of any potential barriers to attendance and participation in the call and the assessment and awarding process as below
   a. Meeting duration – Appropriate duration to facilitate good environmental conditions for assessment and inclusion:
   b. Venue location and arrangements to accommodate needs (if applicable)
   c. Broad ranging panel membership
   d. Meeting management/chairing/assessment criteria

	Question	Response
1.	Name of funding activity	==ESRC UK Census 2021/2 data call==
2.	Summary of aims and objectives of funding activity	The aim is to fund services and activities that enable researchers to find, use and analyse data from the 2021 and 2022 UK censuses for social science-led research.
3.	What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this funding activity? *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	==Census==: We have engaged with the ESRC D&I expert advisory group and external stakeholders including the UK statistical agencies on some aspects of the proposal.
4.	Who is affected by the funding activity?	Applicants to the call. Commissioning Panel members. ESRC staff attending the Panel meeting. The public as beneficiaries of the call outputs and outcomes.
5.	What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	EDI characteristics among successful/unsuccessful applicants will be assessed as part of the review process at the end of the call. In addition, EDI considerations will be included in the feedback form for panel members after the meeting.

GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

ESRC's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind.

ESRC staff receive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants.

ESRC uses a variety of different communication strategies to ensure that our messages

The Panel meeting will be virtual and adjustments will be incorporated to ensure that the meeting is inclusive, including briefing the Chair to ensure that the session is facilitated to take equality and diversity considerations into account.

Eligibility and criteria
- The call is open to all eligible research organisations (RO). Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised RO, but applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research.

Standard Grant Terms and Conditions:

- UKRI standard Grant Terms and Conditions comply with UK equality legislation and include provisions designed to mitigate against potential negative impacts (e.g. sick pay, parental and adoption leave, the possibility of part-time and flexible working, and grant extensions).
- Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that 'The Research Organisation must assume full responsibility for staff funded from the grant and, in consequence, accept all duties owed to and responsibilities for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment and their training and supervision, arising from the employer/employee relationship.' Universities are therefore required to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff.

Panel recruitment:

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the commissioning panel is diverse, with at least a 60:40 gender balance.
- Whilst peer reviewers and panel members are appointed, first and foremost, based on expertise, we will aim to appoint a diverse membership. Final decisions take into account trying to balance the panels by gender and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of career stage and institutions. We will only make recruitment decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high quality candidates.
- A tool has been developed which allows ESRC staff to assess the EDI characteristics of commissioning panels, and this will be used when appointing panels.

Process

- All peer reviewers and panel members will receive the code of practice and guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
- It is the role of panel members to agree final scores for each proposal. Panel members will be briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chairs and Panel Secretaries play a particularly important role in this respect.   An implementation intention statement will be read out at the beginning of the commissioning panel meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or	Please explain and give examples of any	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)

	negative impact?	evidence/data used	
Disability (both mental and physical)	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.

Je-S does not currently comply with disability accessibility schemes. This will be picked up by The Funding Service.

Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office.

Panel meeting attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.

Solicit information (in confidence) from online panel meeting participants and applicants attending the panel meeting about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate.

Online meeting platforms offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:
• Enabling the chat function and closed captioning, and adjusting the volume, to support those with hearing requirements.
• Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers (ensure any images are well described so that text-to-speech applications can recognise them) for the visually impaired.
• Provision of documents in sans-serif dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats.
• Avoiding colours, lighting etc. that may trigger migraines, epilepsy etc.
• Consideration of the length of any online meetings, shortening if necessary and ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda.
• Ensure that staff have had sufficient EDI training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants.

When we promote the event on a website, we will need to check it is accessible and compatible with the range of |

			specialist hardware and software that people with disabilities use to access electronic information.
Gender reassignment	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language where possible in our documents. UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and permit absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's relevant policies and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other health-related absence. Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.
Marriage or civil partnership	None identified.		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions. Dates will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow meeting attendees to make arrangements to attend. The costs of additional childcare for grant-holders,

			beyond that required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the job, and that are directly related to the project, may be requested as a directly incurred cost if the institutional policy is to reimburse them. However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought. Regular breaks in the panel meetings for parental duties including breastfeeding/expressing if required. Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include childcare at the venue, additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children)
Race (including ethnicity)	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)
Religion or belief	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. There could be potential discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias) Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. Considerations might include: • Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – ie. during Ramadan ensuring that meetings finish early so that participants are able to get home to break their fast);

			• Not scheduling meetings when they would conflict with religious attendance or observance on specific days or times (e.g. Jewish Sabbath on Friday evenings or Islamic Friday prayer) • Allowing prayer breaks if requested
Sexual orientation	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
Sex	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Use of language can present a barrier to participation and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged. Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc. Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation (aim for 60:40 split) Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children)
Age	Potential negative or positive depending on scheme eligibility requirements	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged as they don't have the same track record to	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Track record is not an explicit criterion, given likely relationship to career stage and hence (indirectly) age. Panel members are briefed to make clear that they should be assessing the application in front of them and not reading between the lines. They

		draw on as an experienced researcher.	should assess an individual's capability to deliver their proposed research.
		(*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this by no means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age').	The call is open to researchers at any career stage. Use of a variety of different communication strategies to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	See the potential negative impacts outlined above.

Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will **proceed**.		
2. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can **adapt or change** the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	✓	See the mitigations outlined above.
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to **proceed with caution** with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than		

others, providing justification for this decision.		

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	03/03/2023
Review date (if applicable):	N/A