



# Engaging with Seldom Heard audiences

10 principles to enable more inclusive research

To ensure the whole public is at the centre of public policy making, it is fundamental to engage with seldom heard audiences.

Verian has deep expertise and practice in seeking out and understanding the views of vulnerable and underrepresented audiences; bringing more diverse perspectives and experiences into the policy design process.

Across the globe, Verian works to ensure those that are at highest risk of being overlooked do in fact get a voice. Our specialists find ways to bring people forward, hear their perspective, and gather insight to understand them in a public policy context.

We have expertise in reaching seldom heard audiences that have low socioeconomic status, low literacy, low digital usage, rural or remote living, high distrust of government, vulnerabilities due to crime or harm, mental and/or physical disabilities, are currently institutionalised, unhoused or migrants, or other marginalised statuses.

## **10 principles to enable inclusive research and put the whole public at the centre of public policy making**

1. Minimise Barriers to Participate
2. Plan for Complexity
3. Recognise and Reflect Diversity
4. Strengthen Partnerships and Use Peer Networks
5. Embed Accessibility Throughout
6. Lead with Transparency
7. Consciously Create Safe Spaces
8. Understand Digital Expression
9. Reduce Power Imbalances in Deliberative Engagement
10. Keep Planning for 'What's Next'

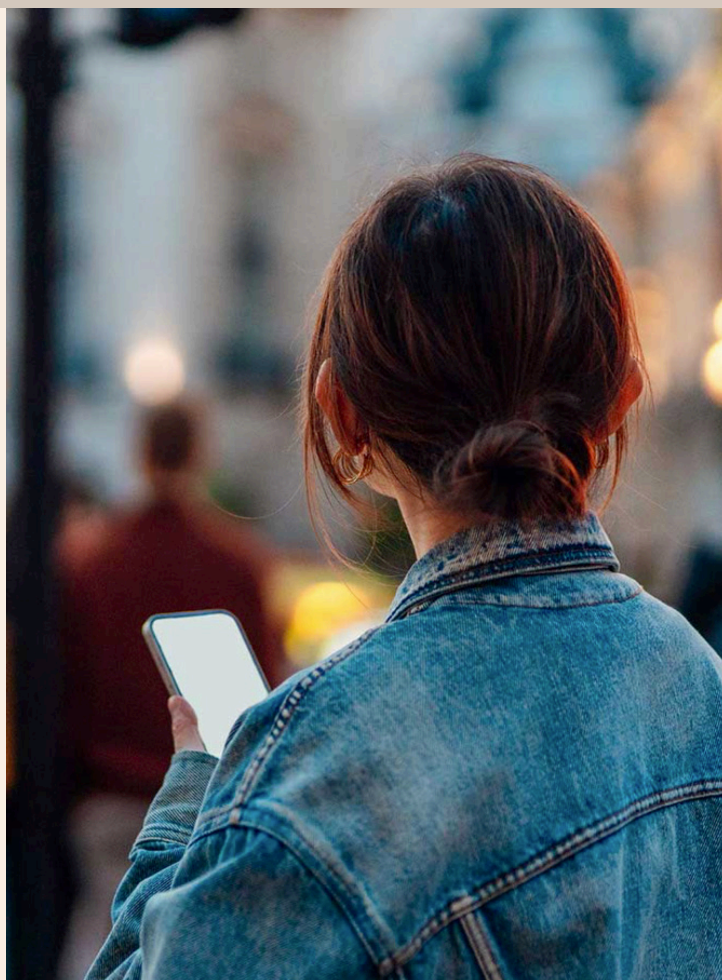


## 1. Minimise Barriers to Participate

Choose methods that actively welcome and empower diverse participants by minimising participation barriers. For example, co-designed methodology (a collaborative and participatory approach) can identify and address obstacles to involvement, ultimately ensuring that all voices are heard throughout the process.

### Our work

- Amplifying the voices of care-experienced young people to inform youth policy
- Using a participatory approach to achieve more inclusive audience insights



## 2. Plan for Complexity

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to engaging with seldom heard audiences. Understanding the complexities of involving a highly diverse sets of citizens will differ each time, and therefore planning well and budgeting in advance is crucial to making these adaptations.

### Our work

- Understanding child wellbeing across Europe with Growing up in Digital Europe (GUIDE)
- Exploring how those who are harming others can be supported to seek help for their behaviour



### 3. Recognise and Reflect Diversity

Assumptions made about seldom heard groups can embed biases into research design that are later reflected in fieldwork. The same depth and breadth ambitions held for commonly heard groups must be reflected in minority groups design as well.

Move away from providing insights that homogenise these voices rather than reflect their diversity by, for example, applying rigorous human rights-based approach (HRBA) to data collection. This principle means that no data collection activity should create or reinforce existing discrimination, bias, or stereotypes.

#### Our work

- Measuring progress towards the objectives set in the EU's Roma strategic framework
- Assessing payment system accessibility in The Netherlands



### 4. Strengthen Partnerships and Use Peer Networks

Collaborate with community groups to build trust, deepen engagement and maximise opportunities for engagement in the design and development phases. It guarantees that voices are heard and play an active role in shaping research, as well as making participants feel valued and comfortable.

Additionally, adopt participatory recruitment approaches to enhance inclusivity while ensuring strategies are tailored to diverse target audiences. For instance, involving participants as community researchers is an effective link to the wider community.

#### Our work

- Understanding the prevalence of lived experience of eating disorders and body image concerns
- Understanding the scale and impact of destitution in the UK





## 5. Embed Accessibility Throughout

Accessibility must be considered in all stages of design. Even with highly motivated participants, if research tools are not designed with accessibility in mind then their ability to engage is at risk. Adapt timelines, modes, formats, settings, moderators to garner better insights with unique perspectives. Examples include taking guidance from advocacy groups, using accessible questionnaires, and multilingual interviewers.

### Our work

- Enhancing Immigrant Youth Integration and Wellbeing in Finland



## 6. Lead with Transparency

Communicate research findings to participants and explain how insights will be used at the end of every cycle. This transparency will help to build trust and highlight participants' value in the policy making process. In addition, clearly sharing and explaining the study's purpose, methods and insights promotes inclusivity, greater participation, and accountability.

### Our work

- Documenting the experience of displaced Ukrainians to inform integration policy
- Amplifying the voices of social housing residents in England to deliver social housing reform

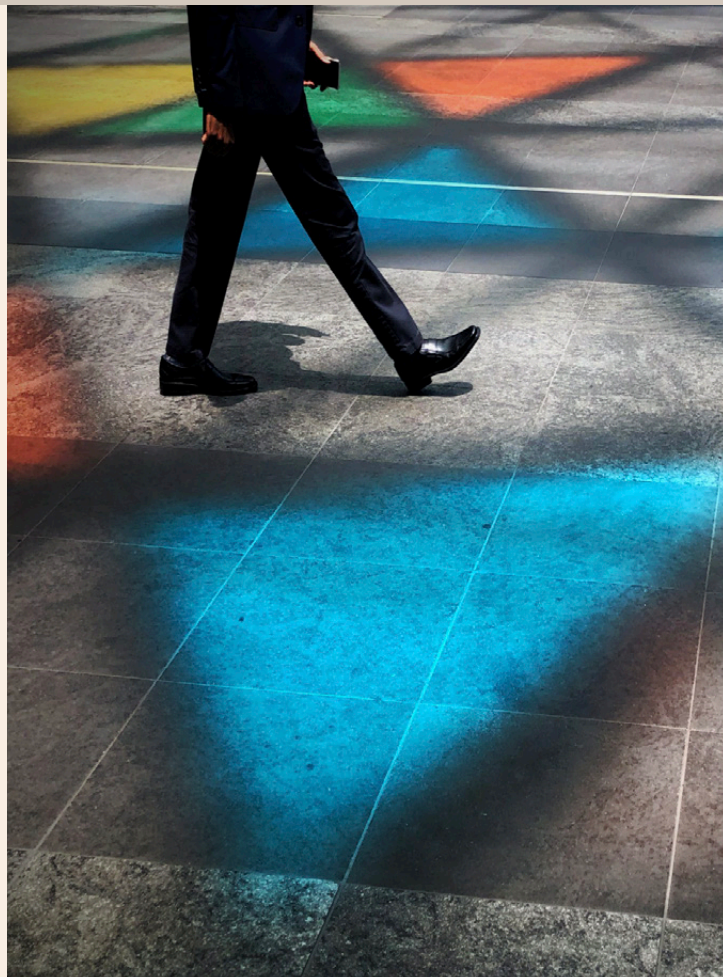


## 7. Consciously Create Safe Spaces

Prioritise psychological and physical safety of participants and researchers. Both should be provided a protected and supportive environment. Safeguarding is important particularly for vulnerable groups, such as clear communication, confidentiality and anonymity, and addressing potential risks including emotional impacts.

### Our work

- Examining drug consumption levels in prisons in France
- Observing men's change journeys in challenging relationships



## 8. Understand Digital Expression

Invest in learning how specific communities express themselves online, including digital language and platforms that guide their communication. This understanding will power more authentic engagement in the right forums online.

### Our work

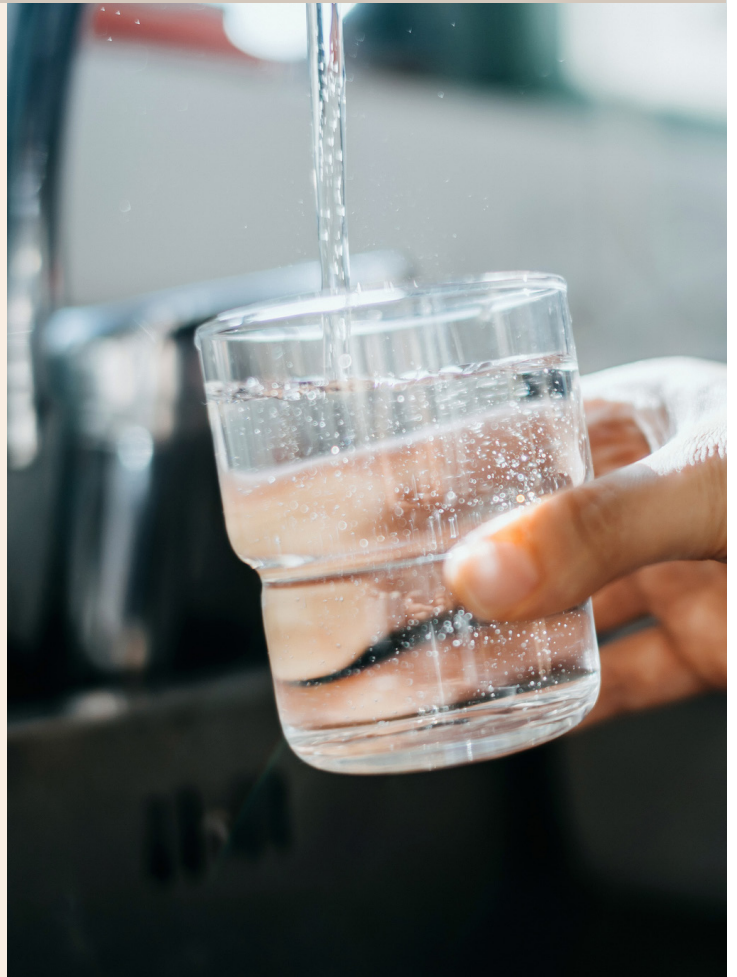
- Tackling online trends of disrespect to stop gender-based violence in Australia

## 9. Reduce Power Imbalances in Deliberative Engagement

Power asymmetries can be a considerable obstacle when engaging with the seldom heard. To create more equal and inclusive conditions for deliberative engagement, provide knowledge and education in advance to support more robust discussion in forums.

### Our work

- **Our Water, Our Voice: establishing customer value in Australia's most precious resource**



## 10. Keep Planning for 'What's Next'

As societies rapidly evolve, there are three areas that call for assessment and adaptive planning for each new project to ensure solutions are the right fit for today's challenges:

### 1. Technology

How can new capabilities in real time be used to improve inclusivity while managing the level of investment in research?

What are the ethical boundaries for the use of AI in public policy research?

### 2. Emerging Audiences

What seldom heard audiences are newly emerging and may meaningfully impact this policy area? Recent examples of emerging audiences may include children who never returned to school after Covid-19, adults and teenagers with changing views on masculinity, and migrants shifting from temporary to permanent status.

### 3. Adjacent Issues

How are emerging social trends outside the core policy area likely to impact engagement in public policy research broadly? Examples may include online harms, loneliness, income inequality, declining civic engagement, declining trust in government and climate change.



## About Verian

Verian is a world leading, independent research, evidence, evaluation, and communications agency, providing services to government and the public realm.

We work with our clients to help solve the next generation of public policy challenges. With offices across Europe, APAC and in the US, our consultants and researchers are supported by our unique global data ecosystem.

We provide gold standard data on the economy and society to decision makers and engage directly with many millions of citizens each year on their behalf.

Combining expertise in human understanding with advanced technologies and data science, our work with clients creates policy interventions, designs better public services, and unlocks behaviour change.

We support the rapid development of policy thinking in moments of urgency. We implement policies on the ground. We build communications to reach diverse and complex audiences.

We bring global best practice and local expertise.

**We are Verian.**

**Powering decisions that shape the world.**