



Intersectional Monitoring

Recommendations from
the exploration process

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Summary

Since 2019, the FAIR SHARE Monitor has been tracking gender distribution in the civil society sector. Today, it also collects data on non-binary gender identities in both the German and international contexts. The International Monitor also gathers data on BIPOC*.

Recognising that this approach to monitoring fails to capture the complexity of multiple forms of marginalisation, the lived experiences associated with them, and the structures that sustain them, FAIR SHARE partnered with civil society experts to explore what a more intersectional approach to monitoring could look like. Through a series of roundtable conversations, initial ideas for a more intersectional approach to monitoring were developed. The process was guided by a working group that met regularly to steer the project. A low-hierarchy approach to collaboration, along with ongoing conversations to clarify roles and ensure the wellbeing of everyone involved, was especially important throughout.

The exploratory process centred on three key elements: a focus on structural change, a distinction between desired and undesired visibility, and the protection and safeguarding of the resources and wellbeing of those adversely affected by discrimination – both in the context of monitoring and within the framework of the project itself.

During the exploratory process, seven principles were established to serve as the foundation for more intersectional monitoring. A comparison between conventional and intersectional monitoring further demonstrated how an intersectional approach reimagines data collection and differs substantially from conventional monitoring.

BIPOC stands for “Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Colour” and represents an attempt to define an umbrella term for groups affected by racism.

To underline these differences and offer concrete examples, previous questions were juxtaposed with possible new questions that a more intersectional monitoring approach might address.

Lastly, additional considerations are outlined to determine what is required for such a transformational monitoring process. This includes, among other elements, the need for a comprehensive overview of more intersectional monitoring approaches, as well as an assessment of existing monitoring strategies. Moreover, consultation with an expert panel and professional (psychological) process support provided by someone who is themselves affected by multiple forms of discrimination are essential. Creating both online and offline learning opportunities is also important to ensure broad, low-barrier access to knowledge about more intersectional monitoring.



The FAIR SHARE team

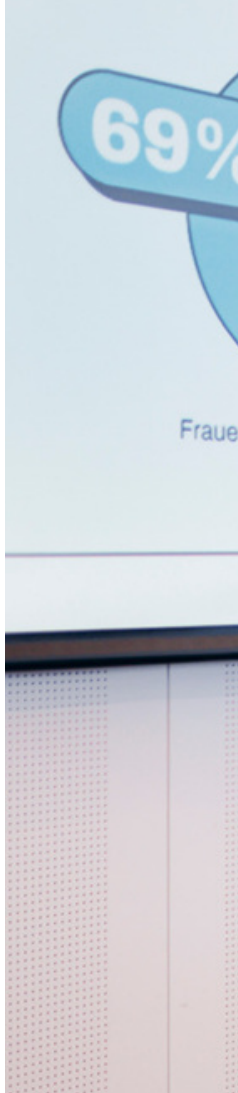
Introduction

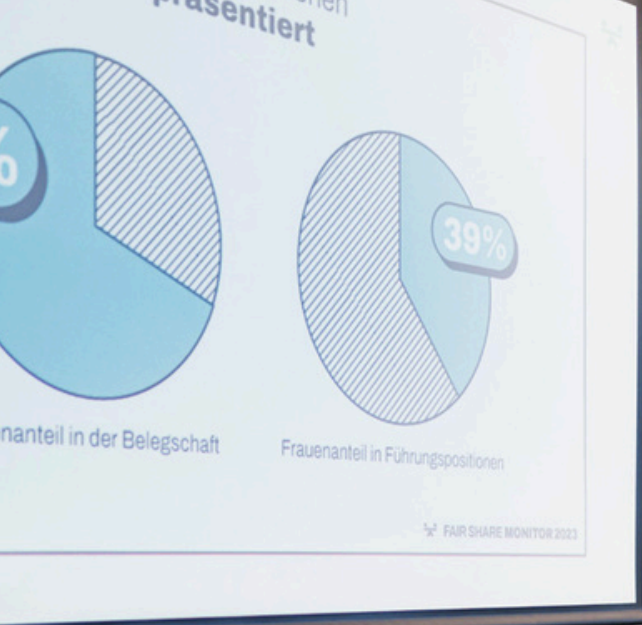
Background

Since 2020, FAIR SHARE of Women Leaders has been publishing the FAIR SHARE Monitor to capture the representation of women in leadership positions within civil society organisations across Germany and internationally by collecting data on binary gender distribution. The FAIR SHARE Monitor was established with the aim of measuring the proportion of women in leadership roles within civil society organisations such as NGOs and foundations. While the International Monitor now includes data on BIWOC, both the German and International Monitors have been expanded to include an additional gender category, namely the umbrella term ‘non-binary’.

However, the Monitor as a tool has so far been unable to capture the complexity of marginalisation and oppression from an intersectional perspective, nor the structures and systems that produce and reinforce these experiences. Simply adding more identity categories is not enough, even this can often be a helpful step toward increasing the visibility of marginalised identities.

From November 2022 to March 2023, FAIR SHARE launched an exploratory process to examine how monitoring could be designed and implemented in an intersectional feminist way.





Presentation of the FAIR SHARE Monitor 2023 © Photothek/Felix Zahn



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About Intersectionality

Intersectionality can be understood as a theoretical concept, an analytical approach and a legal and policy-oriented tool, rooted in Black feminism. The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by the Black scholar and legal expert Prof. Kimberlé Crenshaw to **highlights gaps in legal and institutional structures, and to make visible the interplay of multiple systems and experiences of oppression.** Our understanding of intersectionality is informed by the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw and the Center for



Intersectional Justice¹, founded by Black French scholar and political scientist Dr. Emilia Roig.

Happy Birthday, Intersectionality! Gala for and with Kimberlé Crenshaw on 28 April 2019, organised by the Gunda Werner Institute of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Photos by Mohamed Badarne, CC-BY-SA-4.0.

Intersectionality identifies and examines the various advantages and disadvantages that all people experience as a result of societal and structural systems such as: **capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy and racism.** **Forms of oppression such as ableism, cis- and heterosexism, classism, colourism, queerphobia, anti-Asian racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, Anti-Muslim racism, anti-Roma racism and anti-Semitism are by-products of these systems.**

These systems generate different forms of marginalisation and privilege based on gender, social background, race, disability and other identity markers that are intertwined within global power hierarchies.

To better understand the relevance of applying an intersectional lens to monitoring, the following section briefly outlines what monitoring entails and why it can be useful tool in the context of advancing gender equality.

What is monitoring and why do we need it?

Monitoring in the context of equity aims to generate comparable and measurable insights into the numerical or proportional representation of marginalised groups by regularly collecting relevant data. Ideally, it also identifies entry points for driving progress toward greater justice. For this reason, gathering data on identity characteristics (e.g. gender, age, education, etc.) is often an integral part of organisational diversity strategies in order to:



Identify gaps in representation within organisational structures

Establish goals and the conditions necessary for representation

Track changes in the composition of staff, leadership, committees, etc.

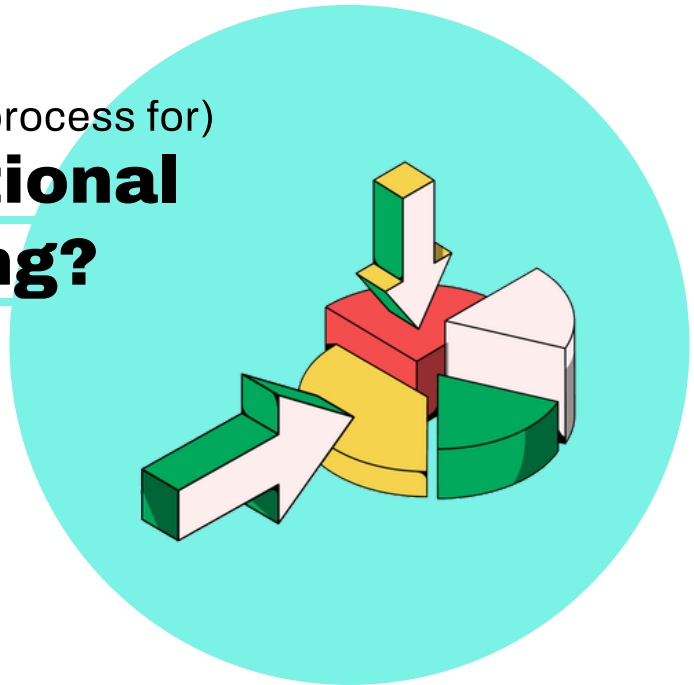
Monitoring therefore has the potential to uncover the underrepresentation of people who experience marginalisation and to shed light on injustices embedded in structures and power relations. It can also reveal how these factors evolve over time – showing movements both toward greater justice and, at times, shifts that lead to less equity.

Gender equality – traditionally focused on binary gender representation – is now measured across numerous monitoring initiatives. These often examine the representation of women in sectors such as business, politics, public administration, the media and culture.

Why

(an exploratory process for)

Intersectional Monitoring?



To date, monitoring processes have failed to capture the many forms of marginalisation and power structures. The following points highlight some of the reasons why current monitoring approaches are unable to do so:

1

Although data collection can capture the status quo and track changes over time, it cannot reveal the complex interplay of power and exploitation structures, nor the resulting experiences of marginalisation that individuals face.

2

Monitoring based on quantitative data collection relies on categorising experiences and identities. While this categorisation helps to identify certain patterns, it also risks fixing identities and experiences in rigid ways. Moreover, the construction of these categories is seldom critically examined when results are later presented.²

3

Without a comprehensive intersectional dataset and without analysing the data from multiple perspectives, monitoring cannot yield conclusions that could inform recommendations for change. Positive developments also remain unexplained, making it challenging to identify and scale the measures or strategies that contributed to them.

4

To simplify data analysis, the information collected is often limited, narrowed down and designated in one-dimensional ways. Moreover, datasets often include primarily those individuals who – despite experiencing marginalisation – still benefit from many other systems of oppression (e.g. **white** cisgender³ women). As a result, the intersections between different forms of marginalisation and their root causes remain invisible. In other words, the gaps that would have been identified from an intersectional perspective are neither acknowledged nor addressed.

Roundtable discussions



5

To ensure comparability, the already limited data points are not adjusted to reflect societal realities or internal organisational contexts and goals.

6

The emphasis on measurable, quantitative data means that lived realities and the varied experiences of marginalisation remain underrepresented. Consequently, the data lacks essential contextual information.

An intersectional approach to monitoring should therefore intervene at this juncture, addressing the gaps and shortcomings left by conventional monitoring processes.

1 Check out: https://www.intersectionaljustice.org/img/2020.4.14_cij-factsheet-intersectionality-at-a-glance-in-europe_du2r4w.pdf

2 Check out: LesMigraS (2012): Identität kennt kein Entweder-Oder. (https://lesmigras.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Dokumentation-Studie-web_sicher.pdf)

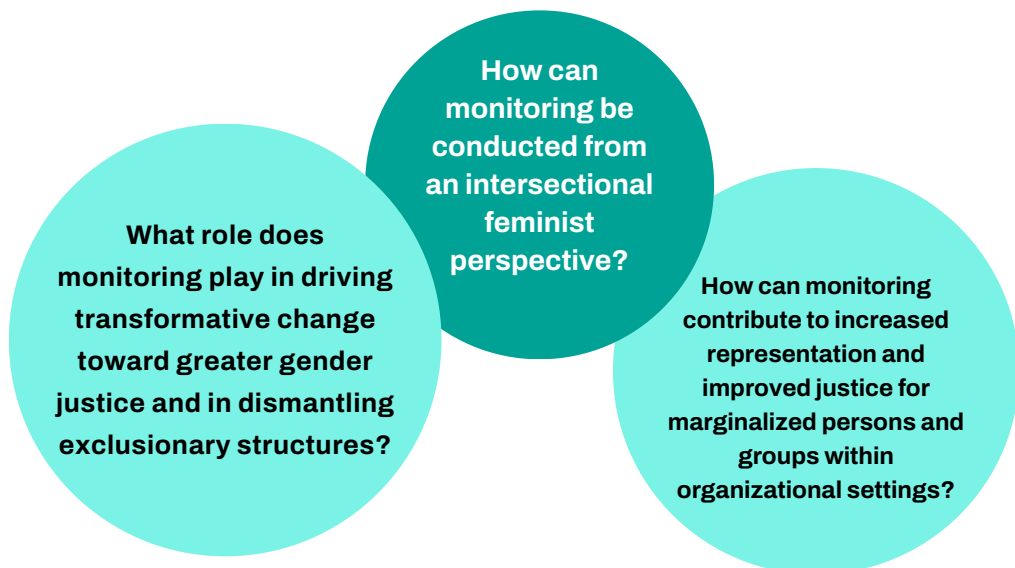
3 Definition: <https://interventionen.dissens.de/materialien/glossar>

The Exploration Process



Process Framework

Grounded in an understanding of intersectionality to which this recommendation paper refers, the exploratory process toward more intersectional monitoring seeks to identify gaps within legal and institutional structures and to explore ways to apply intersectionality as an analytical tool for monitoring processes—particularly within the FAIR SHARE Monitor. In this context, **gender justice is viewed as inseparable from other dimensions of social justice**. The following questions serve as guiding points:



At FAIR SHARE, we felt it was important not to carry out the exploration process in isolation

as we neither hold nor represent the full diversity of expertise and perspectives required. From the very beginning, our intention was to approach this process collectively.

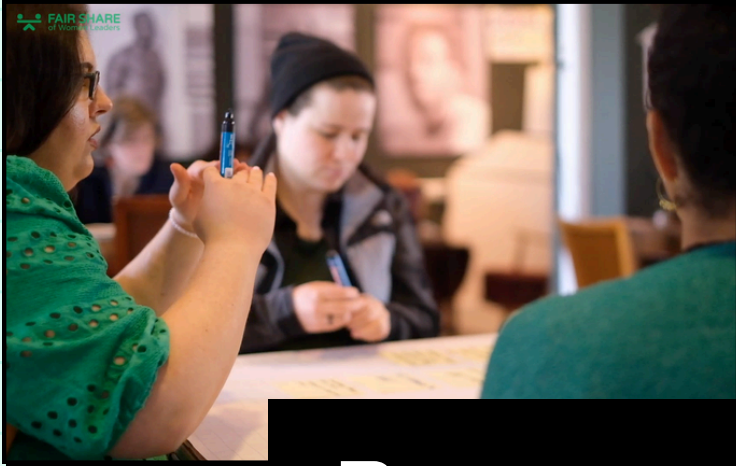
In addition, any substantive answers to these questions can only be developed collectively and through dialogue with a wide range of organizations and individuals with relevant expertise and/or lived experiences of marginalisation. For this reason, three roundtables were convened as part of this exploratory process, bringing together experts from the following institutions:





Während der Roundtable-Gespräche

Additionally, the second and third roundtables were facilitated by an external moderator to help ensure collaboration among all participants with as little hierarchy as possible. We are aware that many perspectives and lived experiences are not yet represented among this group of experts and will need to be included in future processes. Nonetheless, through the roundtables and our collective expertise, we were able to gather several valuable and forward-looking insights, which are presented here.



Process Design

a) Clarifying roles

To keep the process as low-hierarchy as possible and to reflect on FAIR SHARE's own position of power, it was essential during the roundtables to clearly define the roles of all individuals and organizations involved. While FAIR SHARE initiated the first round of invitations and organized the first roundtable, the invitation process for the subsequent sessions was carried out collectively with participants from the first roundtable.

The individuals and organizations who contributed to the first roundtable decided to form steering group, which went on to play a central role in shaping both the content of the subsequent roundtables and the selection of participating organizations. The steering group included experts from tbd*, BIWoC* Rising, DEZIM, and DisCheck. Additionally, during the roundtables participants agreed that any sensitive or personal information shared would remain confidential.

b) Key themes and content

Over the course of the roundtables, it became evident that certain themes play a crucial role when discussing the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of intersectional monitoring. The central topics that emerged in these conversations included:

Structural change

A central question that emerged was how a more intersectional approach to monitoring can meaningfully contribute to broader structural transformation—that is, how fairer and more equitable structures can be created by shifting and redefining existing power dynamics.

Desired and Undesired visibility

Since monitoring is fundamentally concerned with making injustices visible, the discussion explored when visibility of and for certain marginalized individuals or groups is desired and can support structural change—and when such visibility may be harmful or unwanted.

Resources & Well-being of those negatively affected by discrimination

Discussions on this topic primarily focused on how to ensure the well-being of individuals negatively affected by discrimination—both within organizational structures (such as institutions or workplaces) and within the context of monitoring processes, as well as during the roundtable conversations themselves.

c) Shared reflections on developing more intersectional approaches to monitoring

Considering the objectives of a more intersectional approach to monitoring, the following key ideas emerged:

Intersectional Monitoring should

- Be mindful and aware of potential triggers and additional burdens faced by marginalised individuals, while making multidimensional discrimination, marginalisation, and – above all – the previously identified gaps visible
- Identify and critically challenge existing power structures that enable discrimination and marginalisation
- Identify structural barriers and mechanisms of exclusion



Während der Roundtable-Gespräche

- Use data to spark reflection and drive change
- Explain changes – whether improvements or deteriorations – in the representation, safety and well-being of marginalised individuals in order to inform future strategies and actions
- Support context-specific data collection, recognising that organisations and structural contexts may face very different challenges and forms of marginalisation.

Principles

—————> of Intersectional Monitoring

To achieve the goals outlined above, a more intersectional approach to monitoring would need to be :



Power-critical, by collecting data on marginalisation and power. Additionally, as many perspectives as possible should be integrated into the development and implementation of a monitoring approach. This helps prevent existing power structures – and the forms of oppression they reinforce – from being perpetuated or even amplified.



Trauma-informed, to avoid re-traumatising people affected by marginalisation through data collection. The language used, data collection methods, analysis processes as well as the presentation of results must all centre the needs and experiences of those affected.



Data-sensitive, going beyond legally required data protection regulations to also emphasise an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory approach to data handling.



Needs-oriented, to safeguard the well-being of those particularly affected by multiple forms of discrimination before, during and after the monitoring process.



Process-oriented, by aligning monitoring with continuous learning – from conception through implementation and evaluation. In doing so, monitoring shifts from a one-off data collection exercise to a structural tool for driving change.



Transparent and accessible, by involving diverse perspectives from the outset, documenting intermediate steps, decisions and even mistakes, and ensuring clarity about who collects the data, for what purpose, and how – and by whom – it is analysed.



Trust-building, by making participation and collaborative decision-making an integral part of the entire process. Trust should be built and maintained not only with the organisation or commissioning body, but also with all members, employees and stakeholders involved.


By moving toward these goals and principles, it becomes possible for a more intersectional approach to monitoring to...

... consider power structures, injustices and underrepresentation equally:

many data collections on representation place the burden on people affected by marginalisation who are expected to complete questionnaires and, in some cases, disclose sensitive information. A more intersectional approach would equally focus on individuals in positions of power.


...identify structural barriers to representation and define areas where action is needed:

What conditions must be in place within organisations and institutional structures to enable participation and make change measurable? Data collection should expose the structures that sustain or enable unequal distributions of power.



...be embedded within processes and structures to drive change:

When the content and analysis of data are used as starting points for dialogue and exchange, monitoring can help dismantle discriminatory organisational cultures and the structures that enable discrimination.



...become a learning process for individuals and organisations:

Accompanying communication and exchange on structural mechanisms of discrimination can help raise awareness around issues of power, anti-discrimination and intersectionality.

Conventional Monitoring

For what purpose?

- Visibility
- Status quo and change over time
- Representation

What does it do ?

- Categorisation, Measurement
- Proportional representation of different categories
- Tracking change over time

Who is involved?

- Formal structures
- Positions of power

How?

- Standardised data for comparability
- Reduction of complexity

Which data?

- Quantitative data

Intersectional Monitoring

For what purpose?

- Needs and well-being of marginalised communities
- Trust
- Transparency
- Questions power
- Structural change

What does it do?

- Challenges conventional approaches to visibility by centring the needs of people facing multiple forms of marginalisation
- Differentiates between desired and undesired visibility
- Challenges categorical thinking by focusing on gaps and exclusions
- Prioritises making exclusionary and oppressive structures visible

Who is involved?

- Ensures decision-making centres the interests of people facing multiple forms of marginalisation from the outset

How?

- Transparent
- Process-oriented, learning-focused
- Trauma-informed

Which data?

- Qualitative and quantitative data

Old Questions

What proportion of leadership positions are held by women?

How many women are represented across the organisation?

How has the proportion of women in the organisation changed over time?

During roundtable discussions



New Questions

What structural factors and barriers hinder or block access to leadership positions for people facing multiple forms of marginalisation?

Which structures maintain existing injustices?

What visible and invisible forms of power hinder participation and promote exclusion?

Which organisational conditions enable stronger representation of marginalised communities?

What structural and cultural changes are needed for an organisation to create these conditions and reflect these changes outwardly?

How can organisations ensure that change processes are transparent and trauma-informed?

Under what conditions do marginalised people feel safe, listened to, and represented within an organisation?

What forms of marginalisation and exclusion remain unaccounted for, and how can data collection address these gaps while respecting the needs of affected communities?

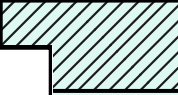
Additional Considerations

A more intersectional approach to monitoring constitutes a paradigm shift in the way data on representation and participation are collected and calls for a rethinking of conventional monitoring. For this transformation to be successful, it requires:

An overview of current approaches to intersectional monitoring (in Germany and internationally), with the aim of drawing on existing knowledge and incorporating best-practice examples from the outset.

An assessment of existing internal monitoring approaches within organisations to better understand concrete challenges and context-specific needs.

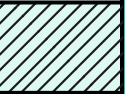

Pioneer organisations coming together to share experiences, collectively make their knowledge publicly accessible, engage in ongoing exchange, and implement more intersectional monitoring approaches themselves.



Continuous support and guidance provided by a body that brings together diverse perspectives of marginalised people alongside expertise in intersectional monitoring.

Professional (psychological) process support provided by a person with lived experience of multiple forms of discrimination, to safeguard the well-being of experts and all participants involved in the process.

The creation of (online and offline) opportunities for collective learning and capacity-building around topics such as anti-discrimination, gender equality, and intersectionality (e.g. joint learning labs, pilot projects for experimentation, etc.).



These recommendations provide an initial orientation for how monitoring can be further developed to become more intersectional. They are not intended to be comprehensive, but instead encourage continued refinement, adaptation, and contextual application. Ideally, this initial exploration can be built upon through future projects advancing the development and implementation of intersectional monitoring strategies, concepts, and tools.

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