



# Our social identities 40 min

EXPLORING FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

MULTI-FORMAT EXERCISE

## About the exercise

### TARGET AUDIENCE

Any group willing to engage in participatory learning and more personal discussions.

### PURPOSE

To help participants see commonalities with people who have other religious/belief identities and think about how identities are connected to vulnerabilities.

### DESCRIPTION

A think-pair-share exercise in which participants reflect on the different aspects of their identity and problematise concepts of 'them' and 'us'.



## Instructions

### RESOURCES

- Flipchart sheet listing 10 'identities'.
- Flipchart sheet listing the discussion questions.

This exercise is available in multiple languages as part of Session 3 of the Local Changemakers Course (see the facilitators guide): [www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-languages](http://www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-languages).

### ADVANCE PREPARATION

#### • CHOOSE TEN IDENTITIES AND PREPARE A FLIPCHART SHEET LISTING THEM

The following list includes 15 'identities' that we may have. Choose 10 of these for your participants to discuss, based on what is most relevant and important for the group to reflect on. Be sure to include some 'fun' identities like sport and music in your selection to lighten up the discussion and provide 'safe' alternatives for people to talk about if they find the discussion questions too sensitive. Do not include any identities that will derail the process, resulting in heated debates – debating issues is not the point of this exercise.

#### IDENTITIES

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| – Religion or belief                       | – Educational level     |
| – Gender                                   | – Hobby                 |
| – Football or other sport club you support | – Class/economic status |
| – Race/ethnicity                           | – Caste                 |
| – Nationality                              | – Age                   |
| – Music taste                              | – First language        |
| – Family situation                         | – Sexual orientation    |
|  | – Ability/disability    |

- **PREPARE YOUR VISUAL AIDS**

Write the 10 identities you chose on a flipchart sheet.

Write the following discussion questions on another flipchart sheet.

- What parts of your identity have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself?
- What parts of your identity have the greatest effect on how others perceive you?
- For what part of your identity do you feel you most often face disadvantage or receive privilege?

**HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE** 4 MIN

Explain that the group is going to take part in an exercise in which we explore the many different aspects of who we are.

- Ask people to get into pairs and move a little apart from neighbouring pairs. It is helpful if they can sit down, but not essential.
- Introduce the exercise by explaining the following:  
Often, we focus on things that separate us. For example, when we think about religion, we tend to think about ‘them’ – the people from other religions, and ‘us’ – the people who share my beliefs and traditions. Religious identities can be very strong. But each of us has many identities that make up who we are – for example being a (local language) speaker, being from (province) or being an avid fan of (football club)! We are now going to do an exercise to help us think about our different identities and how they relate to other people’s identities.
- Read out the ten identities and the discussion questions from the flipchart sheets.

**HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE** 35 MIN

- **THINK** (5 MIN)  
Ask everyone to spend 5 minutes thinking individually about their identities and how they would answer the questions.
- **PAIR** (10 MIN)  
Ask people to discuss the questions in pairs for 10 minutes. Emphasise that no one needs to say anything that feels too private – they should share only what they feel comfortable sharing.
- **SHARE** (20 MIN)  
Bring everyone back to the plenary. Invite people to share their thoughts with the group. All sharing is voluntary! Be sure to lead by example and listen carefully and respectfully to these personal stories.

**NOTE**

Sometimes participants can relate strongly to another person’s story and might interrupt or interject with ‘Me too!’ or a similar comment. Whilst it is ok for participants to respond to someone else’s story by sharing their own feelings or experiences, don’t let anyone interrupt another person’s story or critique their experiences. Gently say, ‘Could you hold that thought until (participant A) has finished sharing. Thank you.’ If it seems appropriate, come back to them after the first participant has finished sharing.

**HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE** 1 MIN

Thank everyone for sharing and say you hope the exercise helped them to think about the many different facets of their identity!

**Source**

Adapted from The Social Identity Wheel, University of Michigan inclusive teaching programme <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/social-identity-wheel/>