

## CASE STUDY 9: USING THE MEDIA

Good communications are essential if research and analysis are to have an influence.

### TIMING

- Make it easy for journalists to cover your research
- Be aware of events competing for attention



### FRAMING

- Think about how your work fits in with the priorities of decision makers

- Without
- distorting the points you want to make



## BRINGING THE ANALYSIS TO LIFE

**Increase** media attention by **focusing** on a **key fact** that **symbolises** a larger **problem**



Present **information** in graph form to make it **more accessible**



**Humanise** the issue with **personal** stories, **quotes** and **case studies**



### SOCIAL MEDIA

- Live tweet debates with **relevant #**
- **Promote** and **share** content
- **Pool resources** with other organisations



### BLOGGING

- Keep it **short**
- Personalise
- Add call to **ACTION**



### E-NEWSLETTERS

- **Tailor** your newsletter to **different** audiences
- **Strong** subject lines
- **Relevant** frequency
- Mobile-friendly

## CASE STUDY 9: USING THE MEDIA

*It doesn't matter how amazing your analysis is, if it just sits on the shelf and nobody uses it.*

WBG member

Good communications are essential if research and analysis are to have an influence on politicians and other policy-makers, or to be useful to civil society organisations. Policy-makers, civil society groups and others need to know that the research and analysis is available, they need to understand how it is useful to them and they need to be convinced to take action.

Good communications can also make it easier to gain support from funders and attract new members to your organisation.

Note: The specific details of which media to target, how best to frame messages and so on will vary from country to country. There are some useful ideas for campaigning and communication with case studies from around the world at: <https://howto.informationactivism.org>

### TIMING IS EVERYTHING

*We have had times when we have spent weeks producing a really long report and had no media or political interest. Then a story will make the news and a short comment can get picked up everywhere.*

WBG member

The UK Women's Budget Group worked with the Runnymede Trust, a race equality think tank, to produce a report on the impact of public spending cuts on Black and Minority Ethnic women in the UK. This was a major piece of work that had taken several months to research and write.<sup>46</sup>

The original plan had been to launch the report in early summer 2017. However, when the Prime Minister announced that there would be a snap election in June we decided to postpone publication. This was for two reasons:

The election offered campaigning opportunities for both organisations that they did not want to miss, reducing the time to prepare the report for publication.

With media attention focused on the election it was likely that the report would get overlooked.

A date was then set for an autumn launch. Just over a week before the launch we discovered that the government was planning to launch the report of its Race Equality Audit on the same day. Again, there was a danger that WBG/Runnymede report would be overlooked with all the media focus on the government report. We decided to 'piggy back' on the government report launch by making clearly visible the links between the findings of our report and the government's report.

With this approach, we made it easy for journalists to tie the two stories together and mention the findings of our research in their coverage of the government's report.

46. WBG, (2017), *Intersecting Inequalities: the impact of austerity on BME women*, WBG and Runnymede, available online at <https://www.intersecting-inequalities.com/>

## FRAMING

Framing is about the story you are trying to tell with your analysis. For example, a report into the impact of spending on health could be framed as:

- a criticism of the government for not spending enough;
- an example of how gender budgeting could help the government improve its policy-making;
- as a piece of academic research;
- or a way of sharing the voices of women.

Framing work to fit in with the priorities of decision-makers can help them engage with the analysis. For example, during the late 1990s and 2000s WBG framed much of its work around women's poverty and the government's commitment to end child poverty. We argued that ending child poverty meant tackling women's poverty: children were poor because their mothers were poor. We highlighted evidence that money paid directly to mothers was more likely to be spent on children than money paid to fathers. This helped persuade the government that tax credits aimed at supporting children in poorer families should be paid to the main carer, usually the mother.

The disadvantage of using a specific type of framing is that it can reduce complexity. For example, in the case described above, our framing might be seen to suggest that women's poverty isn't a problem in its own right. **Tailoring the framing to decision-makers priorities also often means that their priorities go unchallenged.**

## BRINGING THE ANALYSIS TO LIFE

We found that being able to quantify impact with numbers and statistics increased media interest in our work. Our cumulative analysis of spending cuts (see *Case study 4: Cumulative Impact Analysis*) gained widespread media coverage.

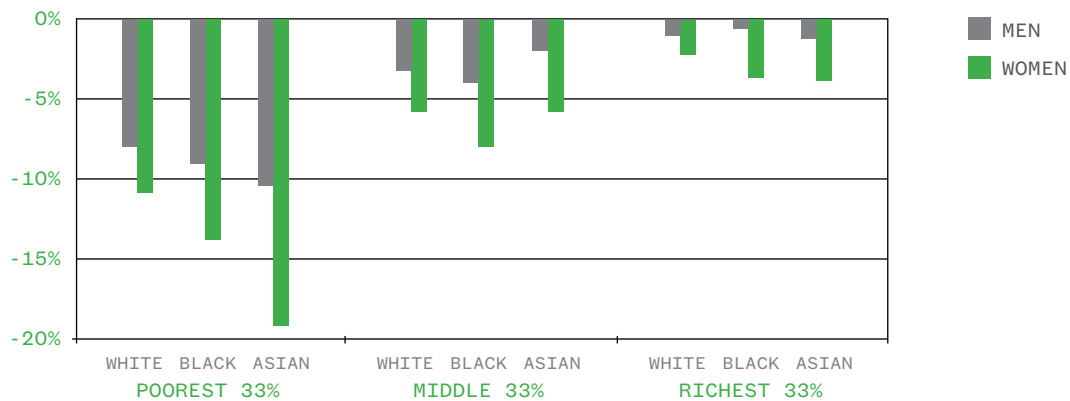
However, some people can be put off by pages of charts showing statistical information or find it hard to focus on the key message of a report. WBG has used a number of tactics to bring the numbers to life:

Focusing on a key fact that symbolises a larger problem. These infographics developed for the 2017 general election highlight the main losers from cuts to social security benefits.

Presenting information in graph form. This graph for example shows that poorer people lose more than richer people from cuts to taxes and benefits, men lose more than women, and black and minority ethnic women lose most of all.



### 2010–20 cumulative individual impact of changes in taxes and benefits (percentage of net individual income per annum by 2020) by household income groups, gender and ethnicity (selected)



SOURCE: WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP 2017

## CASE STUDIES, QUOTES AND PERSONAL STORIES

Individual stories can have more impact than pages of statistics. Print and broadcast media are also more likely to run stories about reports if they can focus on one or two individual case studies. Personal stories can humanize the issue and highlight how a change of policy can have many, often unintended consequences. A good example of this is the story of a young woman who had to move schools when the local authority would no longer fund her bus pass:

*So, I got a bus pass in year 7, year 8, year 9, then all of a sudden, the law changed, I can't get one anymore. They [the council] said I should move to a different school, a closer school. I am going to a school, it's let's say, outstanding... So therefore, because I can't get a bus pass I should move to a different school, buy a new uniform, make new friends, by all new equipment, get new lessons, new teachers, all because I can't get a bus pass.*

– Interview from Manchester

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media, particularly Twitter, is one of the main ways that the Women's Budget Group communicates its message. We live-tweet during the Budget every year, giving instant response to the Chancellor's speech. We pick up on trending hashtags and include journalists' or politicians' twitter handles in our responses, to make sure they notice us and know we are available for comment.

We also live-tweet other important parliamentary debates, commenting on the speeches made, and sharing relevant key facts from our research. We know that MPs may be checking their Twitter feed while waiting to speak, so this can be a good way to remind them of our analysis and encourage them to quote us in their speeches.

Of course, we also use social media to promote campaigns. For specific events, it makes sense to generate traffic through Thunderclaps or informal collaborations.

## THE FEMINIST BUDGET TAKEOVER



The Action: **Contact Your MP**  
How to contact: **Email them via**  
**www.writetothem.com or call**  
**020 7219 3000.**

**HERES AN IDEA OF WHAT  
TO SAY TO THEM!**

Hello! I am contacting you as a constituent to urge you to support gender impact assessments on the Government's budgets.

Tax and benefit changes directly affect **everyone's spending power**. 73% of those benefiting from raising the higher rate of income tax threshold will be men- these proposals mean women will lose **10 times as much as they gain**, and **BME women 12 times** as much!

Please co-sign the "reasoned amendment" to the Finance Bill for **Monday 11th December**. It requires the Government to act to ensure the budget tackles unfairness in our tax and benefits system in Britain.

My vote depends on it - Thank you for listening!

\*From the Women's Budget Group- <https://wbg.org.uk>  
Printed and Produced by Stella Creasy at 23 Orford Road E17 9NL



For example, during the 2017 General Election, we worked with other women's organisations to produce a set of shared infographics on different themes. Every week, we focused on one theme and made sure that all the organisations shared it on various platforms. We scheduled tweets on the same issue in advance for particular days, so that we had a bigger impact.

During the debate on the Finance Bill in 2017, MP Stella Creasy used #feministbudgettakeover to put pressure on the government to do a gender impact assessment of the budget. We also used this hashtag to make sure our tweets on the issue were picked up by people following the campaign.

## BLOGGING

Blogs can be a good way to communicate analysis to a wider audience. WBG hosts blogs on our own website (which we promote on social media) and also writes blogs for other websites.

Good blog posts are generally:

- Short – 500–800 words.
- Snappy – start with a strong opening to make the reader want more.
- Personalised – written from a point of view rather than a simple summary of research.
- Understand the reader – when blogging for another site it is always a good idea to read other blogs on the site to get a sense of style and what people engage with.
- End with a call to action – to follow on Twitter, join the organisation, sign up to a campaign.

## E-NEWSLETTERS

E-newsletters allow WBG to engage directly with members and supporters. In our newsletters we share information about our own research and campaigns, or research and campaigns from sister organisations. We also ask members to help with research projects, advertise meetings and events, recruit staff or volunteers and raise funds.

There are lots of different, often free e-newsletters providers, for example Mailchimp, Groupmail or Newsletter Creator.

When writing our newsletters, we always try to consider the following:

**Audience** – who is the newsletter aimed at? Sometimes it is best to produce different newsletters for different groups so that people get information that is most relevant to them.

**Frequency** – some organisations produce a longer newsletter every month, but sometimes more frequent and shorter newsletters can have a better response rate. Information overload will make people switch off, so it is best not to send too much too often.

**Subject line** – a strong 'headline' means people are more likely to open a newsletter than something that simply says 'newsletter'.

**Can it be read on a mobile?** Many people access their emails on a smartphone rather than a computer, so it's important to check the newsletter's mobile version.

**Call to action** – make it clear what you want people to do as a result of reading the newsletter.