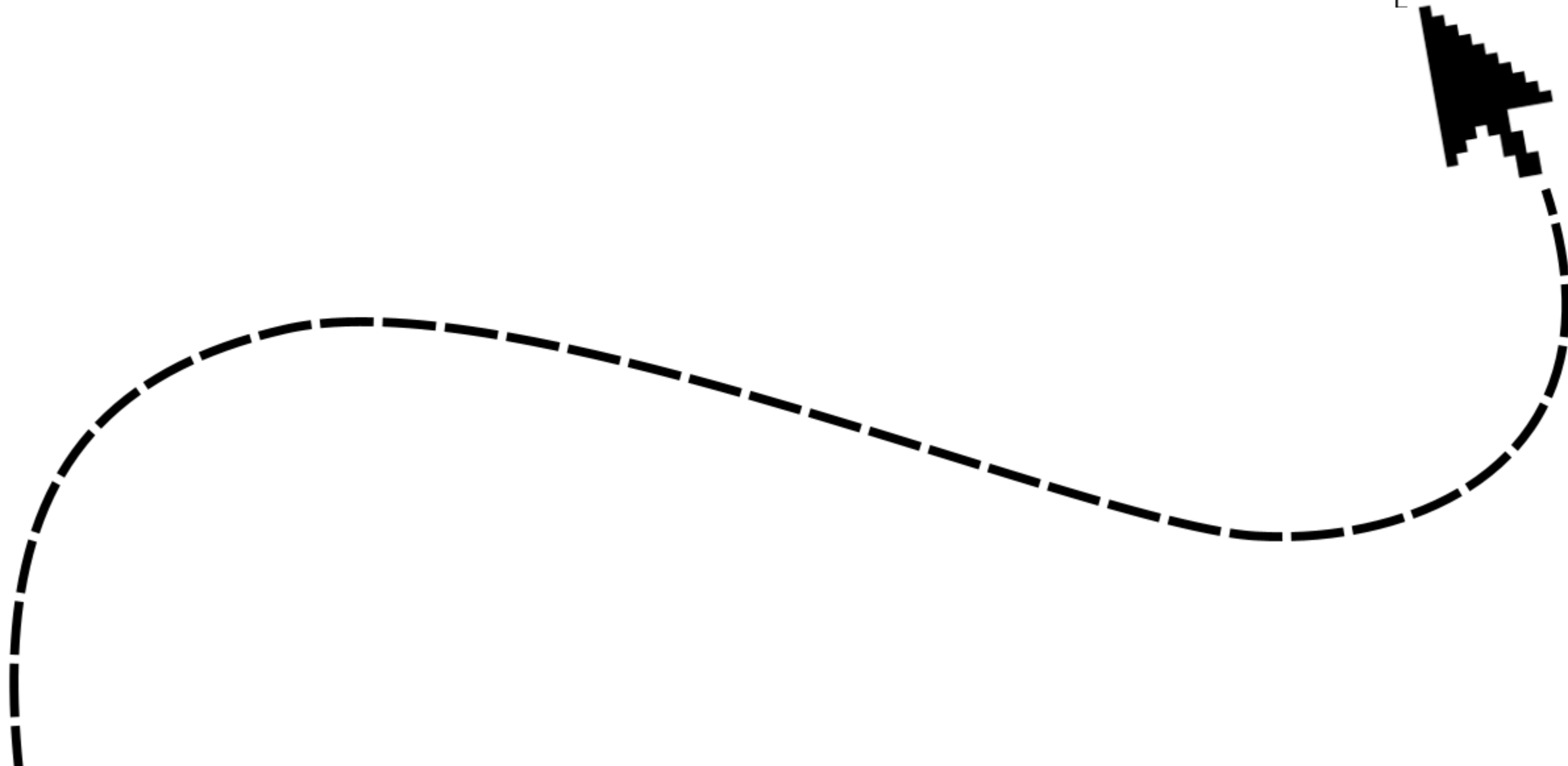


A young person's guide to

data communication





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Why is data communication



Data communication is important because **research can be complicated**.

More specifically, the data that researchers analyse is complex and the jargon that they use isn't always accessible! Additionally, data research is based on information that is collected from the public who deserve to know how this information is being used for good.

Sharing research can influence government policy, practice, and the opinions of the public, inspiring new ways of thinking, understanding and engaging.

Data communication takes research like this₁:

what does this mean??

what's a log point??

gaps are more important than differences in pay growth. The entry pay gaps are large; after accounting for region of work and educational level, ethnic minority groups face an average wage penalty at entry compared to the White UK-born of 0.23 log points (-23 per cent) for men and 0.17 log points (-17 per cent) for women. This entry gap varies

wage penalty??

extracts the main takeaways, and simplifies it like this:

$$(23 + 17)/2 = 20\%$$

"employees of a minority ethnic background are, on average, paid 20% less than their white UK-born counterparts - even when they have a similar educational background and work in the same field"

so important?

Getting

started

Before you start, think about:

Who?

Who is the target audience for your research?

By choosing who you want your work to reach, you can then tailor it to their specific preferences and needs.

An amazing way to do this is to create a **user need profile**². It involves defining:

- the group you want to target
- what they need from your communication
- and what they will use your work to do.

What?

Once you have understood the needs of your intended audience, start to think about:

What information is your audience likely to engage with? Do they prefer short and snappy statistics that show certain trends, or do they prefer more descriptive information delving into the reasons behind these trends?

What format should your output take? You could communicate your data via images and data visualisations, or summarise key points in a report.

How?

How are you doing to reach your audience? Depending on the group you are trying to reach, traditional promotional avenues may not be optimal. Think about the platforms that your intended group engage with regularly.

How are you are going to create your piece of comms? If you decide to do a promotional campaign, think about the forms of media you may use. Text posts/blogs, videos, image-based social media posts - the possibilities are endless.

Decoding research



The most important thing: **make sure you understand the research!**

If you are communicating research of others, it is imperative that you do understand the research, or you won't be able to accurately portray it.

Understand the flow of the research:



If you need more help:

Talk to the researcher: the person that knows the most about the research is well... the researcher! They'll be able to help you decipher the data and can give you tips on how best to portray it.

Talk to your audience: What do you think people would be most intrigued about? What does the target group feel the most important parts of the research are? Talk to the people around you - public panels are a great way to do this.

Visually representing data

Why include visual representations of data in your work?

Visual representations are not only eye-catching, but are also easily digestible and can help people understand data.

Programmes you can use:

If you want to make your own visual data representations, there are many programs you can use:

- [Canva](#) (mainly free)
- [Figma](#) (mainly free)
- [Adobe Express](#) (mostly free)
- [IbisPaintX](#) (mostly free)

you can find free tutorials for these programs online!

You can also contact your host university or research funder's communications and engagement team, or even talk to colleagues who have done similar things before.

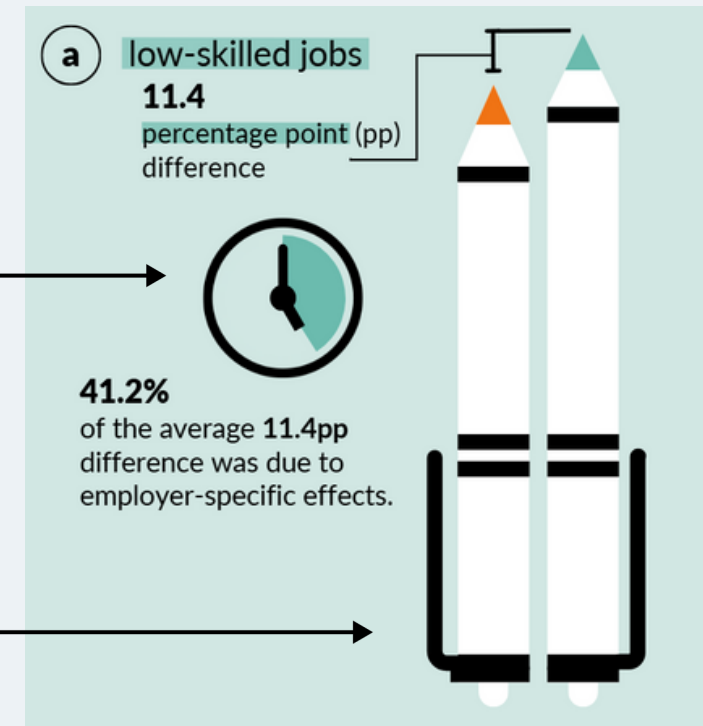
Helpful tips:

1. If possible, think about how you can creatively visualise your data. If possible, try and make them relate to the topic you're discussing.

Example - work-related iconography (made in Canva):

A clock icon being used as a pie chart.

Two pens being used as a bar chart.



2. Remember accessibility in your designs₃.

e.g.: when thinking about the visually impaired:

These two are easier to see.



This green is too similar in colour to the background.

This grey is too similar in colour to the rest of the briefcase.

when in doubt, use a dark colour text against a white background.

and *this font* may be harder to read than **this font**.

[click this text for more more guidance on designing for accessibility!](#)



P r o m o t i o n !

You've created this amazing work, but how will people know about it? You need to promote it!

Create some social media posts! Share it with people who may be interested!

You need to actively seek out your target audience.

Helpful tips:

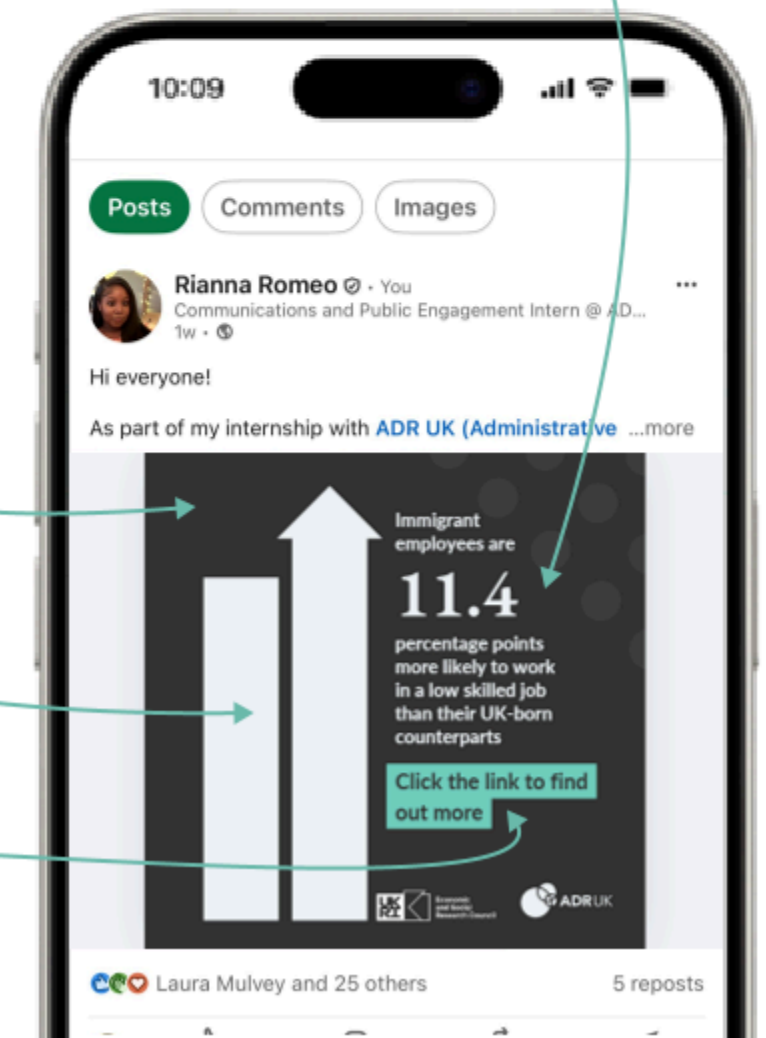
- You can plan your campaign using a guide such as the [OASIS campaign planning framework](#).
- Have a dissemination plan to promote/share your work.
- Realise that people will be looking at this for literal milliseconds, so that's all the time you have to hook them in.
- Hook people in with something eye-catching - whether that's a visual, snappy title, or something else.
- Try talk to the public to figure out what they deem attractive – public panels will also help see if your work is understandable. Make sure that the public panel contains your intended audience.

Main data point is large to draw people's attention.

Dark background for contrast. Also decided by public panel!

The data visualisation takes up the majority of the space and is easy to understand!

Call to action, verbally tells people what to do next.



Potential challenges

Here are some common challenges you may face when communicating research and how to solve them!

Problem: The research you are trying to communicate about is very technical and complicated, and you don't know where to start!

Advice: Schedule a call with the researcher, ask them what they believe the most important parts of their research are (remember to take notes). Try and summarise the main points of their research into bullet points. Then you can figure out what the focus of your project will be.

Problem: You're having trouble communicating research in an engaging and accessible way.

Advice: Try and involve members of the public, either to co-develop the output or seek their feedback, for instance via a public panel.



Final words

You've read through this guide, and hopefully you've gained an amazing insight into data communication!

This guide has taught you how to start, what things to be aware of, the power of visual communication, and how to solve any possible problems you may encounter. All I can say is...

Have fun and get creating!

References

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- (4) Guide to campaign planning: OASIS - GCS [Internet]. Communications.gov.uk. 2020 [cited 2025 Sep 18]. Available from: <https://www.communications.gov.uk/guidance/marketing/delivering-government-campaigns/guide-to-campaign-planning-oasis/>