



40

YEARS OF IMPACT

We're just
getting started.

Rethinking "CALD": Language, identity and diversity in research and practice

1pm AEST, Tuesday 16 June

Sli.do results: pre-poll

• 123 votes

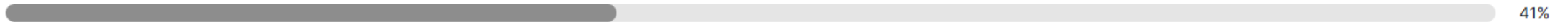
Do you identify as having a culturally or linguistically diverse background?



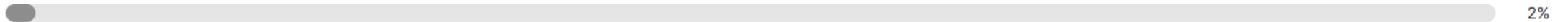
Yes



No



Unsure



Prefer not to say

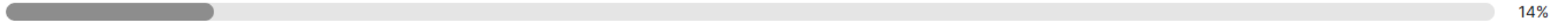


Sli.do results: pre-poll

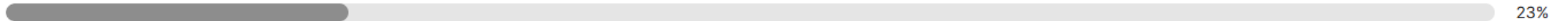
• 142 votes

How do you perceive the term 'CALD' (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)?

Very positive – it is inclusive and appropriate



Somewhat positive



Neutral / unsure



Somewhat negative



Very negative – it feels exclusionary or problematic

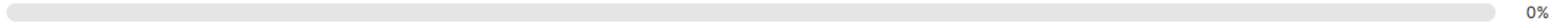


Sli.do results: post-poll

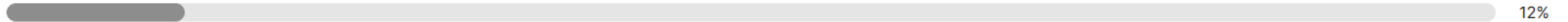
• 74 votes

After today's discussion, how do you now perceive the term 'CALD'?

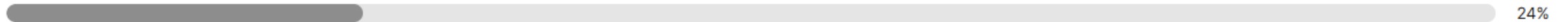
Very positive – it is inclusive and appropriate



Somewhat positive



Neutral / unsure



Somewhat negative



Very negative – it feels exclusionary or problematic



Sli.do results: post-poll

• 18 votes

In your opinion, what is one key takeaway from today's discussion?

We need to be cautious about the way we ask people questions

Bottom-up thematic categorisation process

Language is important however for research and broader study, common terms do help alot.

Using generic catch-all terms such as CALD flattens difference

Collecting data about cultural diversity is complex. There is no one size fits all.

We need to think more about race and ethnicity

Engage with people to understand them

Terms like CaLD are reflective of a deeper rooted racist issue in Australia.

Intentional language, co-design, be transparent with communities

There is no right answer and challenges persist in public health reporting.

Allowing people to self-identify or define themselves sounds like the best approach

Important to include ethnic background

Use categories to discuss equity issues, not label people

More problems than solutions

Engagement with community

Interesting perspective

Use more specific language where possible

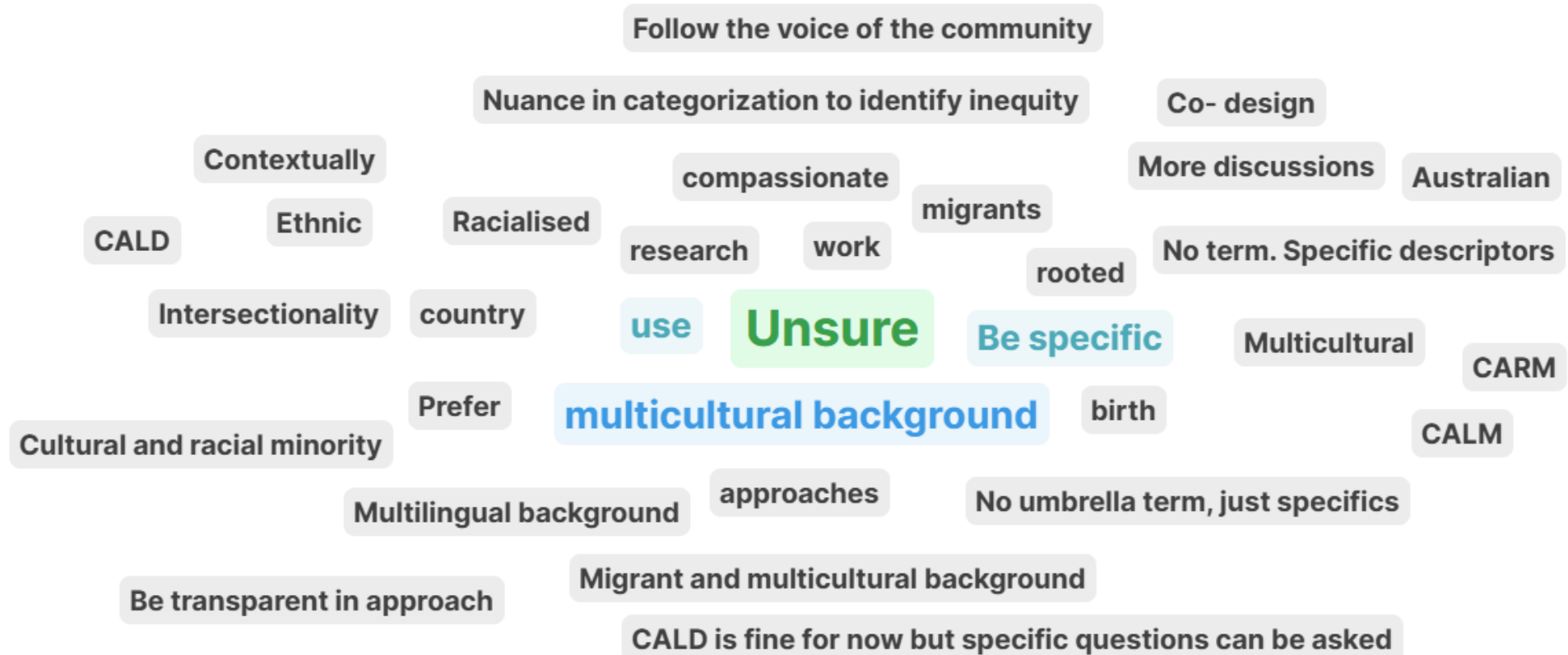
Ask people

Sli.do results: post-poll

- 30 votes

What term or approach would you now suggest, if any?

Review answers 25 >



Resources

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Recommended reading

- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11910949/>
- <https://connectsci.au/pu/article/35/3/PU25003/200232/Why-public-health-practitioners-and-researchers>

References and further reading

- Anderson, P., Mapedzahama, V., Kaabel, A. & O’Leary, J. (2022). *Racism at Work: How organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism*, Diversity Council Australia, Sydney.
- D’Almada-Remedios, R., Groutsis, D., Kaabel, A. & O’Leary, J. (2021). *Counting Culture: Towards a Standardised Approach to Measuring and Reporting on Workforce Cultural Diversity in Australia*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia & University of Sydney Business School, Sydney.
- Mapedzahama, V., Laffernis, F., Barhoum, A. & O’Leary, J. (2023). *Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: a framework for (intersectional) action*, Diversity Council Australia, Sydney.
- Mapedzahama, V., O’Leary, J. & Laffernis, F. (2025). *Applying Intersectionality at Work*, Diversity Council Australia, Sydney.
- Ngo, H. & Laffernis, F. (2024). Polarisation at Work, Diversity Council Australia, <https://www.dca.org.au/resources/di-planning/polarisation-at-work>.
- Nixon, S.A. (2019). The coin model of privilege and critical allyship, *BMC Public Health*, 19:1637, 209.

Rethinking “CALD”

Language, identity and diversity in research and
practice

Ilan Katz, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney

Impact of labels like "CALD" on identity and belonging

- Most “CALD” people don’t use the term or identify as CALD
 - It is mainly used for bureaucratic purposes or research
- Very hard to define and many people could be classified as CALD or not CALD depending on particular context
- Terms for the other Australian groups are equally contested:
 - White/mainstream/Anglo Celtic, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/Indigenous/First Nations

Research and policy dilemmas

- Research (and policy) often has to categorise people into broad categories and to identify the differences between different groups of people.
- Without this, important differences can be missed and research can be misleading and policies can be wrongly targeted
 - For example it is important to know whether CALD people have equal access to health services
 - Just taking the average of Australian wellbeing misses out important differences and inequalities
- On the other hand ALL categorisations of humans are to some extent arbitrary and categorisation always misses nuance and complexity
 - Eg sexual orientation and gender, disability etc.
- However research also has to take into account the burden on participants and confidentiality and privacy

Alternatives to CALD; equally problematic

- CARM – Culturally and Racially Marginalised
- LOTE – Language Other Than English
- Priority populations
- British terms
 - Ethnic Minority/Minority Ethnic/Black and Minority Ethnic
 - Visible Minority
- ABS
 - Country of birth
 - The country of birth of their parents
 - Religion
 - Whether they are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin
 - Whether they use a language other than English at home (and if so, which language they speak)
 - English language proficiency (for those who use a language other than English at home)
 - Ancestry
 - Australian citizenship
 - Year of arrival in Australia (if born overseas).

Categorisation in policy and research vs dignity, inclusion

- Research needs categories for analysis and for generalisation of findings, but does not have to use the term CALD to achieve this.
- Eg recent research we have conducted on CALD veterans' need for and engagement with services, the advisory group preferred the term *migrant or multicultural backgrounds* because CALD was not a meaningful term for the participants.
 - However report used CALD as this is the term used in the bureaucracy.
 - Findings confirmed that there is no common CALD experience of services and supports for veterans.

Intersectionality

- Culture is only one form of diversity
- Our research indicates that other social identities can be equally important for many people
- Thus ideally research would take into account the whole range of demographic factors and identities relevant to participants

Conclusion

- CALD is a problematic term which includes a whole range of people who may be very different from each other and is hard to operationalise
- For many purposes it is important to explore in much more detail people's cultural, linguistic and other identifications
- However there are contexts where it is important to generalise for both policy and research
 - Need to take into account how participants are likely to respond to questions and categories
- Alternative terms such as CARM and LOTE are equally problematic, so we are still looking for the most appropriate term

Questions?

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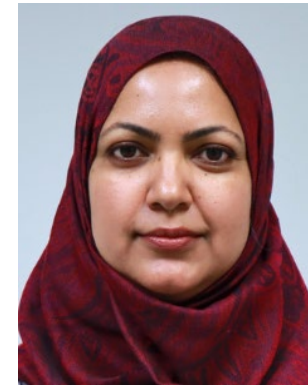


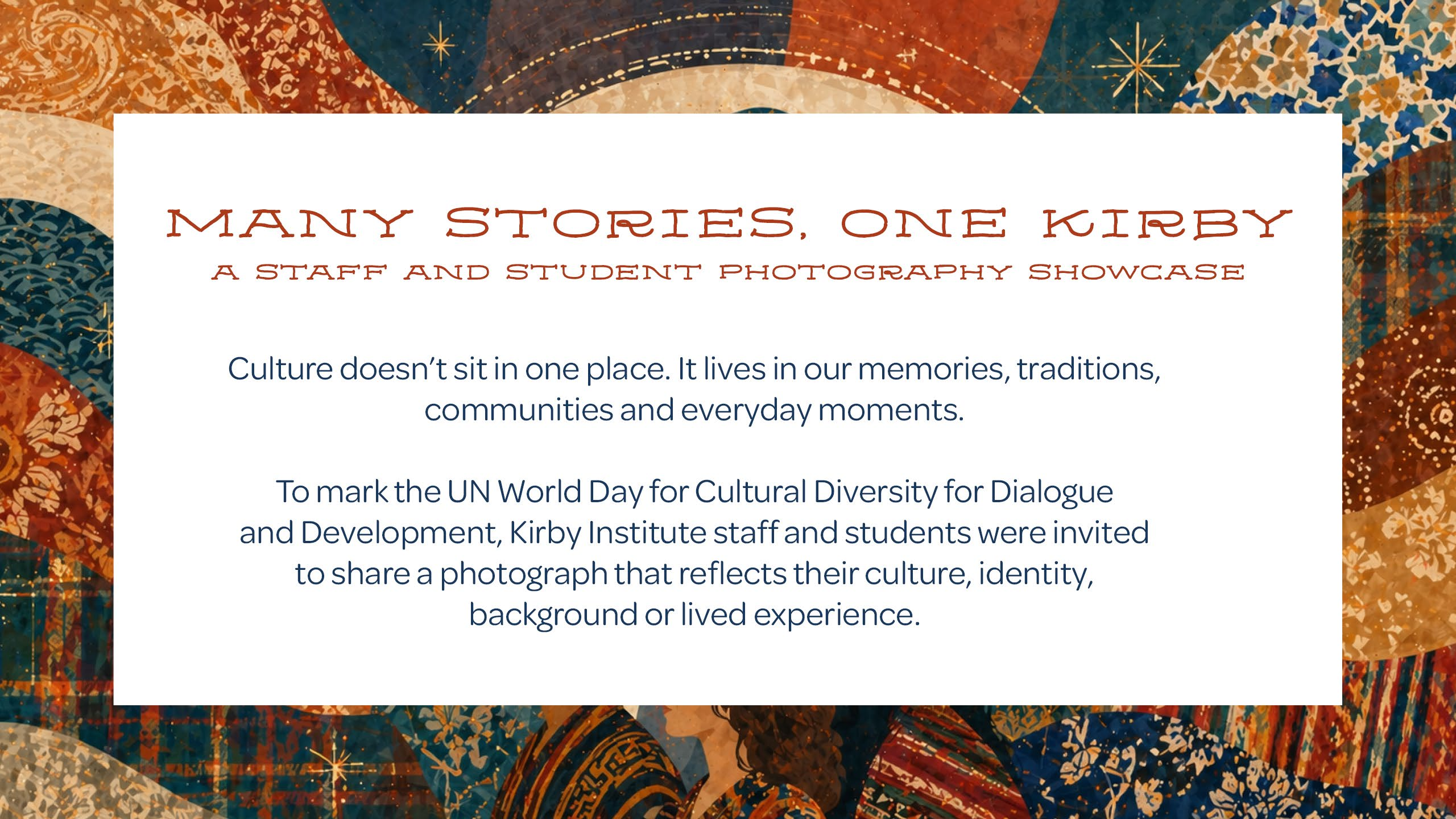
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MANY STORIES, ONE KIRBY

A STAFF AND STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWCASE

Culture doesn't sit in one place. It lives in our memories, traditions, communities and everyday moments.

To mark the UN World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, Kirby Institute staff and students were invited to share a photograph that reflects their culture, identity, background or lived experience.

MANY STORIES, ONE KIRBY

A STAFF AND STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWCASE

[kirby.unsw.edu.au/
many-stories-one-kirby](http://kirby.unsw.edu.au/many-stories-one-kirby)

View the gallery online and
cast your vote for the
🏆 **People's Choice Award** 🏆

Voting closes
Friday 26 June

