

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE IRB
INCLUSIVE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA COLLECTION

In order to uphold the Belmont Report’s ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, researchers should consider carefully the options provided to participants when collecting demographic data. The purpose of this document is to provide researchers with guidance on how to collect demographic data from participants in an inclusive, representative way.

Recommendations:

- Assess whether or not demographic information about participants is needed to accomplish the goals/aims of the study. If not, the researcher should consider not collecting it at all.
- Explain to the participants why you are asking for demographic information
- When presenting options, randomize how the groups are displayed. By putting certain options first, we may be reinforcing the existing social hierarchies, thus perpetuating the lack of inclusivity. Most survey programs allow you to randomize responses.
- Consider the following when designing a survey/study:
 - Give the participant the option to skip, omit, and/or not respond to any question they do not wish to answer. You can do this by including a “prefer not to say” option as a response option on the survey.
 - Provide the option to select multiple responses, rather than one single choice, on demographic questions (e.g. “select all that apply” vs. “select one”). Often people identify with more than one group.
 - Include a “none of these” option
 - Allow a write-in option. This will allow participants to identify with their own terms
- Avoid the use of the term Other: While it is important to include a response choice that has an option for individuals to enter information that does not appear on a list, having to enter something in an “Other” category can alienate some respondents. Instead, consider using language like “Prefer to Self-Describe.”
- Keep up to date with evolving terminology from communities you are collecting data from. No response option perfectly encapsulates a person's identity, but by keeping up to date with terminology, you as the researcher can be more sensitive to the community. If possible, get input from the communities that represent your population of interest.

Suggested Language for Questions:

It is important to recognize that language matters and the following are suggestions of how you might ask demographic questions in a manner that is more inclusive. No demographic questions can perfectly represent someone’s background, but we have drawn on several resources (listed at the end of this document) to provide guidance. Below are a few of the most used demographic questions to get to know a sample. Depending on the purpose of your study, you may require less or more background information. The following resource provides an excellent overview of how to ask demographic questions in an inclusive way [More-Than-Numbers.pdf \(friendsnrc.org\)](#).

Ethnicity

There are many ways you can ask questions about ethnicity. The following are a few examples, but other options may fit your data collection better. The important thing is to allow participants to choose as many options as feel true for them and to allow them to self-describe if that fits best for them.

1. I identify as: (Select all that apply)
 - a. African American
 - b. Asian
 - c. Asian American
 - d. Black African
 - e. Latinx/Hispanic
 - f. Middle Eastern
 - g. Mixed Race/Multi-race
 - h. Native American/Alaska Native
 - i. Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
 - j. White/European
 - k. Prefer to self-describe: _____
 - l. Prefer not to answer

OR

2. Which of the following best describes you (alphabetical order); select all that apply. You may also include additional information on the lines that follow.
 - a. African American or Black: _____
 - b. American Indian or Alaska Native: _____
 - c. Asian or Asian American: _____
 - d. Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish Origin: _____
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African: _____
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: _____
 - g. White: _____
 - h. Not listed here or prefer to self describe _____
 - i. Prefer not to answer

OR

3. Which category best describes you?
 - a. Prefer to self describe _____
 - b. White (e.g., German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc)
 - c. Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (e.g., Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, etc)
 - d. Black or African American (e.g., African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc)
 - e. Asian (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc)

- f. American Indian or Alaska Native (e.g., Navajo Nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village or Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc)
- g. Middle Eastern or North African (e.g., Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc)
- h. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (e.g., Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, etc)
- i. Some other race, ethnicity or origin

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

1. Sex Assigned at Birth:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Intersex
 - d. Prefer to self-describe: _____

2. Which of the following best describes you (choose all that apply)
 - a. Prefer to self-describe _____
 - b. Woman
 - c. Non-Binary
 - d. Man
 - e. Agender
 - f. Transman
 - g. Transwoman
 - h. Gender fluid
 - i. Gender queer
 - j. Prefer not to answer

OR

3. How do you currently describe your gender identity (open-ended question)?
 - a. _____
 - b. I prefer not to answer

4. What are your pronouns _____? (Choose all that apply)
 - a. Prefer to self-describe _____
 - b. Prefer not to answer
 - c. He/His/His
 - d. She/Her/Hers
 - e. They/Them/Theirs
 - f. Ze/Hir/Hirs
 - g. Ze/Zir/Zirs

5. How would you describe your sexual identity (select all that apply)?
- a. Asexual
 - b. Bisexual
 - c. Heterosexual/Straight
 - d. Gay
 - e. Lesbian
 - f. Fluid
 - g. Demisexual
 - h. Pansexual
 - i. Queer
 - j. Questioning
 - k. Prefer to self-describe _____
 - l. Prefer not to answer

Resources:

[Demographics - Creating Inclusive Surveys - Guides at Penn Libraries \(upenn.edu\)](#)

[Four Strategies for Crafting Inclusive and Effective Demographic Questions - Ithaka S+R](#)

[More-Than-Numbers.pdf \(friendsnrc.org\)](#)

[Guide to LGBTQ+ Inclusive Forms \(denverptc.org\)](#)