



Guidelines for Demographic Questions

The Research Ethics Boards (REBs) understand the need for demographic questions and understand that the type of questions asked are dependent on research question/field. However, there needs to be a balance between validating the research data and being respectful to participants by providing a broad, inclusive list.

When creating your demographic questions, ask yourself:

- Why am I asking this specific question? Is it relating to my research question or is to establish my participant profile for publication purposes? In most cases, gender is the relevant category, although in limited specific studies, biological sex may be relevant.
- Are there meaningful differences in the categories I create/list?
- Is my participant population sensitive to the depth of responses available?

Below are REB reviewed and approved demographic questions. Please only use questions relevant to your research question. Please note, these terms may differ across different regions/countries and may change over time. Please use the most appropriate terms for your participant population or research context.

Please note, many of these questions can have multiple answers. It is best practice to allow more than one choice. However, if your study requires one choice, please reword the question to ensure that you are asking for the term that 'most' represents the participant with an acknowledgement that people may identify with multiple.

Gender

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) defines gender as socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society. Gender is usually conceptualized as a binary (girl/woman and boy/man) yet there is considerable diversity in how individuals and groups understand, experience, and express it. [This information is for your knowledge and doesn't need to be included with the question.]

My gender identity is: _____ (open ended)



My gender identity is [select all that apply]:

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary/Trans/Gender Diverse
- Or please specify: _____(open ended)
- Prefer not to answer

Sex

Typically, only sex or gender is asked based on your research question. Please ensure you are using the correct question for your study.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) defines sex as a set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy. Sex is usually categorized as female or male but there is variation in the biological attributes that comprise sex and how those attributes are expressed. [This information is for your knowledge and doesn't need to be included with the question.]

What sex were you assigned at birth? _____ (open ended)

What sex were you assigned at birth?

- Female
- Male
- Intersex
- Please specify: _____(open ended)
- Prefer not to answer

Sexual Orientation

Which of these commonly used terms would you use to describe your sexual orientation? Select all that apply.

- Aromantic
- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Demisexual
- Gay



- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Two-Spirit
- My sexual orientation is not listed above
 - Please tell us how you identify: _____(open ended)
- Prefer not to answer

Relationship Status

My current relationship status is [select all that apply]:

- [Casually dating]
- Common law
- [Dating multiple people]
- Divorced
- [Engaged]
- [Exclusively dating]
- Married
- Single, never married
- Separated
- Widowed
- My relationship status is not listed here
 - My relationship status is: _____
- Prefer not to answer

Options in brackets may be preferred when working with young adults (ie. undergraduate students).

Indigeneity

Indigenous is a broad term use to identify the original descendants of that land. It is important to understand your study population and create questions specific to your population. If your study is interested in identifying Canadian Indigenous peoples, you will have a different set of responses than if you wish to identify people of Turtle Island/North American descent or global Indigenous peoples.

For studies where all participants will be from Canada, and you wish to better understand Canadian Indigenous peoples, include the following questions:



Are you Indigenous?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

[if yes] Which of the following groups do you belong to? Select all that apply.

- First Nations
- Métis
- Inuk (Inuit)
- Other (please specify): _____
- Prefer not to answer

Racialized/Ethnicity

As per Statistics Canada, ethnicity refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of a person's ancestors. It does not refer to citizenship, nationality, language, or place of birth. Racialized persons is a term used to describe the identities of those who may have experienced the social effects of marginalization based on notions of race, ethnicity, or "origin." [This information is for your knowledge and doesn't need to be included with the question.]

We use "racialized persons" instead of "race" to acknowledge the social impact of racialization in Canada. In this question, we are asking about non-Indigenous racialized persons. [You may want to include this statement for the following question.]

Do you identify as a racialized person?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

My race/ethnicity is: _____ (open ended)

Race/ethnicity is broad and could encompass hundreds of examples. Having an open-ended option is preferable so no group is excluded but will make data analysis more difficult. Please note, in 2021, Statistics Canada piloted a new approach to race and ethnicity. A list of examples of ethnic and cultural origins can be found [here](#). If you wish to create options for your demographic questions, please review the most common racial/ethnic origins of your study population and provide a list where participants can



select all that apply. Always include an open text for participants to provide other options. Always provide an option of 'Prefer not to answer'

Persons with Disabilities

The definition of a person with a disability to be used is from United Nations, as per the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, "a Person with a disability includes someone who has a physical, intellectual or learning disability, a sensory impairment, and/or a mental/emotional health issue, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Are you a person with a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer



References

- Cameron, J. J., & Stinson, D. A. (2019). Gender (mis)measurement: Guidelines for respecting gender diversity in psychological research. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 13(11). <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12506>
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research. (2015, June 17). *Definitions of sex and gender*. Retrieved February 16, 2021, from <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/47830.html>
- Hyde, J. S., Bigler, R. S., Joel, D., Tate, C. C., & van Anders, S. M. (2018). The future of sex and gender in psychology: Five challenges to the gender binary. *American Psychologist* 74(2). doi: 10.1037/amp0000307
- Statistics Canada. (2017, October 25). *Ethnic Origin Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2016*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/guides/008/98-500-x2016008-eng.cfm>.
- Statistics Canada. (2020, July 20). *Ethnic or cultural origins: Technical report on changes for the 2021 Census*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/98-20-0002/982000022020001-eng.cfm#a7>
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Article 1 – Purpose Enable*. United Nations. Retrieved August 23, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-1-purpose.html>
- University of Guelph. (n.d.). *What kind of demographic information should I collect about my sample? What kind of questions should I use to collect demographic information? How do I ask about sex and gender?* <https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/support-document/what-kind-demographic-information-should-i-collect-about-my-sample-what-kind>

Additional Resources

- Egale. (2022). Home - egale. Retrieved August 23, 2022, from <https://egale.ca/>
- Friedman, C. (2018, February 7). *Why demographics matter: Disability identity, disability community, and reducing disparities*. The Council on Quality and Leadership. Retrieved August 23, 2022, from <https://www.c-q-l.org/resources/articles/why-demographics-matter-disability-identity-disability-community-and-reducing-disparities/>



University
of Manitoba

Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics - Fort Garry
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
T: 204 474 8872
humanethics@umanitoba.ca

Office of the Premier. (2022, May 2). *New anti-racism Data Act will help fight systemic racism*. New anti-racism data act will help fight systemic racism. Retrieved August 23, 2022, from <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022PREM0027-000673>