

Examples for Demographic Questions for Survey Projects
Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning
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Context: IRAP has received requests about appropriate phrasing of demographic questions for survey and research projects on campus. To help address those questions and provide some guidance, this document provides examples for phrasing demographic questions when conducting research on-campus. We reviewed standard reporting requirements to federal and state agencies and consulted campus units and off-campus resources for the examples.

Researchers on campus are free to use or not use these examples based on your individual project needs. The goal is to provide multiple, inclusive options for collecting demographic data on surveys as needed to help us provide a supportive environment for all people on campus.

Factors to Consider as you Choose Demographic Questions:

- Adding demographic questions to a survey or research project can be useful if you believe that responses to the main questions in your project might differ based on how participants answer demographic questions. (e.g. Prior research indicates gender identity might impact responses to survey items or experimental treatments.)
- Adding questions to a survey or a research project can make the survey longer and lead to lower response rates. Carefully consider what questions to add and what purpose the responses will serve.
- It is advisable to provide an option to allow people to self-identify for a particular demographic variable and an option to not respond.
- The examples provided in columns 2 and 3 of the table below are generally more inclusive than the reporting language required at the state/federal level.
- The needs of your professional organization or publication in your field may follow a standard disciplinary convention that sets an expectation for reporting demographic information about your sample (e.g. APA Style includes a participants section that includes demographics).
- Determining how representative your sample of respondents is compared to the overall UWL student body or other population is a common task in reporting results. You can only address that issue if you capture demographic information on your data collection tools or have a method to match students to other sources of that demographic information (e.g. WINGS).
- Collecting demographic data of a sensitive nature increases the responsibility of the researcher to maintain data security.
- You may need to collapse various responses when analyzing the collected data in order to have a large enough sample for data analysis. The desire to be inclusive often competes with the methodological/statistical concerns of analyzing data when categories need to be combined to allow for meaningful analysis. Seek guidance from appropriate campus resources, such as the Statistical Consulting Center, as you face these issues.
- If the number of respondents in a demographic group is smaller than 5, you should not present or publish publicly about that group because the number is small enough that individuals could be identified. Recall the importance of treating your respondents and their data ethically as required by our IRB protocols.

The most common questions we have received in the office relate to the phrasing of gender identity/gender expression, sexuality, race, ethnicity, first generation status, and Pell grant eligibility. We have also included military/veteran status and student classification.

Table 1: Exemplars of Demographic Items for Surveys or other Research Projects

Demographic Category	Example(s) Based on State/Federal Reporting Requirements	Examples	Additional Examples
<p>Race/Ethnicity</p>	<p>Common Data Set/IPEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hispanic/Latino Black or African American, Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic Asian, Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic Two or more races, Non-Hispanic Race and/or Ethnicity Unknown <p>A separate variable is captured for international students, which are reported as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-resident Alien <p>UW System Common Application:</p> <p><u>Ethnicity:</u> Are you of Hispanic or Latino/a origin?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes/No <p>(If Yes, choose one or more from the following list.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuban Puerto Rican Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano/a Other Hispanic or Latino/a <p><u>Race:</u> Choose one or more of the list below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> African American or Black American Indian or Alaska Native (specific tribal affiliation) Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Cambodian Hmong Laotian Vietnamese Other Asian White 	<p>Campus Climate 2018: What is your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> White Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish Origin Black or African American Asian** Native American or Alaskan Native Hawaiian Native or other Pacific Islander Some other race, ethnicity, or origin_____ <p><i>**IRAP recommends, based on our student population, to split the Asian category into Southeast Asian and Other Asian.</i></p> <p><i>Another option would be to include more specifiers after Southeast Asian to read Southeast Asian (Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese)</i></p>	<p>ACPA Standards 2013**: How would you describe your racial identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free Response_____ Prefer not to answer <p>Researcher then must code free responses as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> African American or Black American Indian or Alaska Native or Indigenous or First Nation Arab or Middle Eastern Asian or Asian American Hispanic or Latina or Latino Multiracial or Biracial Individual who list two or more races No response Prefer not to answer <p><i>**American College Personnel Association (ACPA) is now the College Student Educators International (www.myacpa.org)</i></p>

Demographic Category	Example(s) Based on State/Federal Reporting Requirements	Examples	Additional Examples
<p>Gender/Gender Identity**</p>	<p>Common Data Set/IPEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female <p>UW System Common Application: Gender For state and federal reporting, please provide: ___Female ___Male</p> <p>Gender Identity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman • Man • Trans or Transgender • A gender identity not listed here • Prefer not to Answer 	<p>Campus Climate 2018: Which term best describes your gender identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman** • Man** • Transgender woman • Transgender man • Non-binary or gender queer • Two-spirited (refers to a person who has both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some First Nations people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity. This is a Native American identity.) • Self identify: _____ <p>National Survey of Student Engagement: What is your gender identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man** • Woman** • Another gender identity, please specify ___ • I prefer not to respond <p><i>**Some researchers prefer to replace Woman with Cisgender Woman and Man with Cisgender Man to denote respondents whose personal identity and gender matches their birth sex.</i></p>	<p>ACPA/CSEI Demographic Standards 2013: How do you describe your gender identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Response _____ • Prefer not to answer <p>Researcher then must code free responses as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man or Male or Masculine • Transgender Man or Male or Masculine • Transgender Woman or Female or Feminine • Woman or Female or Feminine • Gender non-conforming or Gender queer • Intersex or other related terms • No Response • Prefer not to answer
<p>First Generation Status</p> <p>(often defined as neither parent or guardian who student has lived with has a bachelors degree)</p>	<p>UW System Application: Has either of your parents earned a four-year college/university degree? Yes/No.</p>	<p>Campus Climate Survey 2018: What is the highest level of education completed by your parent(s)/legal guardian(s)? <u>Mother/Legal Guardian 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than high school • High school graduate • Some college • 2 year degree • 4 year degree • Professional degree • Doctorate <p><i>Same options repeated for <u>Father/Legal Guardian 2</u></i></p> <p><i>Note: Focusing this item on the student's primary caregivers education level without denoting parental gender is advised.</i></p>	<p>National Survey of Student Engagement What is the highest level of education completed by either of your parents (or those who raised you)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not finish high school • High school diploma or GED • Attended college but did not complete degree • Associates degree (A.A., A. S., etc) • Bachelor's degree (B.A., B. S., etc) • Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc) • Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc)

Demographic Category	Example(s) Based on State/Federal Reporting Requirements	Examples	Additional Examples
<p>Pell Grant Eligibility (sometimes used as proxy for low income)</p>	<p>Common Data Set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipient of a Federal Pell Grant • Recipient of a Subsidized Stafford Loan who did not receive a Pell Grant • Student did not receive either a Pell Grant or a subsidized Stafford Loan <p><i>Note: These categories come from Financial Aid data and won't work well as items for student surveys. Shown only as an example of how IRAP reports data for this variable.</i></p> <p>WINGS Student Database: (based on Financial Aid Data) Pell Eligibility: Yes/No</p>	<p>Arizona State Student Affairs Guide: Did you receive a Federal Pell Grant as part of your financial aid package?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don't know 	<p>It may be useful to use a Social Class Identity variable in lieu of Pell Grant Status.</p> <p>Student Experience in the Research University (SERU): Which term best describes your social class identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealthy • Upper-middle or professional • Middle-class • Working-class • Low-income or poor
<p>Sexuality</p>	<p>Sexuality is not asked nor tracked for State or Federal Reporting</p>	<p>Campus Climate 2018: Which term best describes your sexuality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asexual (You experience little to no sexual attraction.) • Bisexual (You are attracted sexually and/or romantically to two or more genders.) • Gay, lesbian or queer (You are a man or a woman who is attracted sexually and/or romantically to others of the same gender.) • Heterosexual/straight • Pansexual (Gender is irrelevant to you in matters of sexual and/or romantic attraction.) • Questioning (You are someone who is questioning your sexual orientation.) • Self identify: _____ • Prefer not to identify <p>National Survey of Student Engagement: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight (heterosexual) • Bisexual • Gay • Lesbian • Queer • Questioning or unsure • Another sexual orientation, please specify: _____ • I prefer not to respond 	<p>ACPA/CSEI Demographic Standards 2013: How do you describe your sexual identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Response _____ • Prefer not to answer <p>Researcher then must code free responses as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asexual • Bisexual • Fluid • Gay • Heterosexual • Lesbian • Pansexual • Queer • Questioning • No Response • Prefer not to answer

Demographic Category	Example(s) Based on State/Federal Reporting Requirements	Examples	Additional Examples
Military Status /Veteran Status	<p>UW System Application: Have you and/or a parent or spouse served in the U.S. Military? (Check all that apply). __Self __Parent/Spouse __ Neither</p>	<p>Campus Climate Survey 2018: What is your military status? (Check all the apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never served • Active Duty • National Guard/Reserves • Military spouse • Military dependent/child • Veteran (eligible to receive VA benefits) <p>Other (Please specify)_____</p>	<p>Arizona State Student Affairs Guide: Do you identify as an active member or veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes, veteran • Yes, active duty. <p>National Survey of Student Engagement: Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves or National Guard? Yes/No</p>
Student Classification	<p>What is you student classification? (Based on Credit reporting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FR (0-29 credits) • SO (30-59 credits) • JR (60-89 credits) • SR (90+ credits) • Other (for example, non-degree seeking, seeking second degree) Please specify: _____ 	<p>Arizona State Student Affairs Guide What is you academic class standing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-year • Sophomore • Junior • Senior • Graduate or Professional 	<p>Note: <i>First year and Freshman are not always interchangeable terms. IRAP standard reports using student credit hours identify students with under 30 credits as freshman. First-year student is a broader term that can encompass any new student to UWL, or those in their first year of college on any campus and recognized as more inclusive. Researchers need to determine the purpose of tracking class level to decide upon the appropriate term.</i></p>

Saved at: N:\IRAP\Reports for UWL Websites

Other Resources:

The ACPA/CSEI 2013 Standards:

<http://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/Proposal-Demographic-Questions-and-Responses-2.pdf>

Guidelines from Arizona State University Student Affairs:

<https://lgbtq.arizona.edu/sites/lgbtq.arizona.edu/files/Inclusive%20and%20Functional%20Demographic%20Questions.pdf>

File developed by UWL Faculty/Staff for gender and race/ethnicity items:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NMZIBYldFbAvGUdg39ya2D99vg1vJWedQkQu_KYUwro/edit?ts=5c352508

Article describing a process to explain the use of demographic questions to respondents to improve response rates to them.

[Lor, M., Bowers, B. J., Krupp, A., and Jacobson, N. \(2017\). Tailored explanation: A strategy to minimize nonresponse in demographic items among low income racial and ethnic minorities. Survey Practice, 10 \(3\).](#)

Duke University Initiative on Survey Methodology with helpful tips (left panel menu): <https://dism.ssri.duke.edu/about>