

Diversity monitoring guidance and standard questions

This note aims to provide guidance and standardised question options for demographic monitoring. It also includes options for monitoring further characteristics that may impact on inclusion. The size, scale and topic of research will influence whether additional questions are used. Collecting information on protected characteristics will help decision makers to give due regard to the public sector equality duty by understanding who they have reached and what their views are. However, given there are small numbers of responses in some categories, we must also recognise that in order to get views from minority groups, we will typically need to undertake targeted engagement.

Rationale for the question choice/format has been added below each question to reference the source and support future review. Key references are the [Harmonised standards and guidance – Government Analysis Function \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](#), Census 2021 questions and the GP Patient Survey as an example of good practice.

Standard introduction

About you

We would like to ask some questions about you. These questions are completely optional, but we hope you will complete them. This will help us understand who we have reached with our survey, and whether different groups have different views or needs. Any information you provide will be kept entirely confidential and will never be traced back to you as an individual.

Postcode

Postcode is recommended where a geographic spread of respondents is needed.

Please provide the first three or four characters of your postcode, e.g. DH1 or TS15

Age

Age is a protected characteristic and must be included. Example 1 should be used in most instances. However, if space is a premium, or there is a need to compare analysis in different age bandings (i.e. service user data is in bandings that can't be broken down), use Example 2.

Example 1

What age are you? (Please select only one)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 16-24 | <input type="radio"/> 65-74 |
| <input type="radio"/> 25-34 | <input type="radio"/> 75-84 |
| <input type="radio"/> 35 – 44 | <input type="radio"/> 85+ |
| <input type="radio"/> 45 - 54 | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> 55 – 64 | |

Example 2

What age are you?
(Please write in)

- Prefer not to say

Rationale: Question wording and response options (in example 1) is aligned with the [Harmonised standards and guidance – Government Analysis Function \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](https://civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/standards-and-guidance-for-government-analysis-function)

Sex and gender

Sex and gender reassignment are both protected characteristics. Case law has also indicated that people who are gender fluid or non-binary can have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. Therefore, questions on sex and gender should be included.

Which of the following best describes you?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe (please write in)

Rationale: Question and response options are aligned with GP Patient Survey. Harmonised questions are not available in relation to sex and gender, but work is ongoing and so this will need to be kept under review in 2024. The Census 2021 asks 'What is your sex?' but only offers options of male and female (with a note that there will be a separate question on gender) and therefore may not feel inclusive.

Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Rationale: Aligns with Census question wording, with an additional 'prefer not to say' option. GPPS also uses this wording and a 'prefer not to say' option.

Ethnicity

Race is a protected characteristic and should always be included. Although the harmonised question is under review, the website recommends that full classification is used, as set out in Example 1. For electronic surveys, the question can be split into one overarching question and routed into follow up questions – see Example 2. Do not use the first question in example 2 independently.

Example 1

Rationale: The harmonised question pages state that they are not as up to date as the Census and therefore recommends the Census 2021 is referred to as the most up to date question until further harmonisation takes place. The harmonised question pages recommend that full classification is used. Note, capitalisation and ordering has been changed in line with post Census guidance on writing about ethnicity [Writing about ethnicity - GOV.UK \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/writing-about-ethnicity)

Example 2

What is your ethnic group? [FOR ELECTRONIC USE ONLY. Use in conjunction with routing to further questions]

- Asian or Asian British**
Includes Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian background
- Black, black British Caribbean or African**
Includes black British Caribbean, African or any other black background
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**
Includes white and black Caribbean, white and black African, white and Asian or any other mixed or multiple background
- White**
Includes English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British; Irish; Gypsy or Irish Traveller; Roma, or any other white background
- Other**
- Prefer not to say**

Which one of the following options best describe your white ethnic group or background?

- English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British

- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Roma
- Other (please describe)

Which one of the following options best describes your mixed or multiple ethnic group or background?

- White and black Caribbean
- White and black African
- White and Asian
- Other (please describe)

Which one the following options best describes your Asian or Asian British ethnic group or background?

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Other (please describe)

Which one of the following options best describes your black British, Caribbean or African ethnic group or background?

- Black British
- Caribbean
- African
- Other (please describe)

Religion

Religion is a protected characteristic and therefore should always be included.

What is your religion or belief? (Please select only one)

- No religion or belief
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant, and other Christian denominations)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Prefer not to say
- Other religion or belief (please write below)

Rationale: The Census 2021 and Harmonised Standard is 'What is your religion?'. However, the question has been amended to account for the fact that the protected characteristic is religion and belief, and therefore to allow scope for someone to reference a belief.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic and therefore should always be included.

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Straight or heterosexual
- Gay or lesbian
- Bi or bisexual
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe (please write below)

Rationale: Aligns with Census 2021 with amendment to 'prefer to self-describe' instead of 'other, please write in'. This reflects Stonewall's recommendations. Consultation on a harmonised standard is due to conclude October 2023 and so this should be reviewed review following the results.

Disability and long term health conditions

Disability is a protected characteristic. Include at least Example 1 on disability. Consider your topic and how much analysis is likely to be undertaken to determine whether you need more detail. You may also need to rephrase the question if the topic you are asking about would automatically mean someone is defined as disabled (i.e. they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Conditions such as Cancer a covered from the point of diagnosis).

Example 1:

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions, impairments, or learning differences that impact on your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? Please select all that apply.

- Long term health condition
- Physical impairment or mobility issues
- Sensory impairment, such as blind or visual loss and Deaf or hearing loss
- Mental health condition
- Learning disability
- Neurodivergence
- Other (please use the space below to tell us more)
- No condition or impairment
- Prefer not to say

Rationale: This was formed from looking at a range of examples and aiming to find wording that would be inclusive of physical, mental, sensory and neurological difference. The word 'substantial' was left out because although this is the legal definition of a disability, work on the harmonised standard demonstrates people struggle to understand a frame of reference for 'a little' and 'a lot'. Substantial is harder terminology and people are unlikely to understand it is defined as 'more than trivial or minor'. Response options were a hybrid of additional guidance provided for the online Census, some updates in language, the impairment standard and example from Hamid. Work is ongoing for a disability harmonised standard and therefore, this should be reviewed in 2024.

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy and maternity is a protected characteristic.

Are you pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last ~~year~~ six months?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
- Not applicable

Marital status and cohabitation

Marriage and Civil Partnership is a protected characteristic in terms of employment but can be included for service users, where relevant. If you need a measure of cohabitation, the harmonised standard is at Example 2 below.

Example 1

What is your legal marital or registered civil partnership status?

- Never married or in a civil partnership
- Married
- In a legally registered civil partnership
- Separated but still legally married
- Separated but still legally in a civil partnership
- Divorced
- Formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved
- Widowed
- Surviving partner from a civil partnership
- Prefer not to say

Rationale: Harmonised standard. A second stage question is available if there is a need to understand sex of the respondent's partner.

Example 2

Are you living with someone in this your household as a couple?

- Yes
- No

Rationale: Harmonised standard

Parental responsibility

Optional question dependant on scale and nature of project.

Are you a parent of or a legal guardian for any children aged under 16 living in your home?

- Yes
- No

Rationale: Aligned with the wording of the GPPS survey

Caring responsibility

Optional question dependant on scale and nature of project.

Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illness, or problems related to old age? (Please exclude anything you do as part of your paid employment)

- No
- Yes, 9 hours a week or less
- Yes, 10 to 19 hours a week
- Yes, 20 to 34 hours a week
- Yes, 35 to 49 hours a week
- Yes, 50 or more hours a week
- Prefer not to say

Rationale: Aligned with Census 2021 wording

Armed forces

Optional question dependant on scale and nature of project.

Do you or have you previously served in the in the UK armed forces?

- Yes, I serve in the regular armed forces
- Yes, I serve in reserve armed forces
- No
- Prefer not to say

Rationale: although there is a slightly different Census question (Have you previously served in the in the UK armed forces?), the example above is more inclusive of those currently serving. Even on a staff survey, people may still serve in the reserves.

Socio-economic background

Optional questions dependant on scale and nature of project. Consider the requirement to reduce health inequalities and whether inclusion of socio-economic questions could help. There are eight possible harmonised questions available on socio-economic background, covering school type, free school meals, number of employees (employed and self employed), supervisor status, parental occupation and parental qualification.