



## Inclusive and Functional Demographic Questions

In order to continuously improve how we educate and innovate, we must recognize the multitude of cultures and identities that make up the University of Arizona. The intentional pursuit of diversity and inclusiveness requires embedding and practicing Inclusive Excellence in every endeavor, aspect, and level of the university.

Survey instruments often include questions that allow respondents to self-describe various aspects of their personal and academic identities. While many of these elements may already be captured through institutional data sources, demographic identities can be fluid and are often oversimplified when collected for external official reporting. More inclusive questions can help to recognize and affirm the identities and experiences of our students, and result in more actionable data.

Such questions and response items should be:

- Added purposefully to a survey with an intentional rationale for use (e.g., monitor trends overtime, disaggregate responses based on identity, distribute information)
- Designed in a way that acknowledges the scope, complexities, and contextualized nature of social identities (ACPA, 2013).

Demographic questions with limited response options that do not reflect students' identities or where students are unable to select more than one category when multiple options apply may result in unintended negative outcomes for respondents (Sanchez, 2010; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009).

Rankin and Garvey (2015) discuss this as a balancing act of demographic survey questions which support intersectional theory, inclusiveness, and quantitative methods. The following statements and survey questions are examples of how one might intentionally support this balance and honor students' fluid and intersecting identities.

### Additional Survey Design Resources

[Survey Administration](#): If a survey is the right assessment tool for you, implement these survey distribution strategies to determine your sampling method and increase response rates.

[Likert Survey Questions](#): Review guidelines on how to best formulate Likert scale questions and response to mitigate bias and produce valid and useful results.

[Survey Privacy Statement](#): Uphold the University of Arizona Privacy Principles through the incorporation of a privacy statement in your survey.

## Select Practices for Inclusive Demographic Questions

### Utilize 'Select all that Apply' questions when possible

While these question types often require additional steps in preparing data for analysis, the inclusion of multiple choices better reflects the complexity of student identities compared to single choices and aims to reduce the harm experienced by not seeing yourself reflected in the options provided.

### Avoid 'othering' language for write-in options

While we strive for inclusivity, we will likely miss a demographic identity option when formulating survey response options. Our instinct will be to cover these omissions by including an 'other' response option. Consider the impact on a respondent who discovers that the survey, and from their perspective the institution or department which sent the survey, considers their identity to be an 'other' and excluded. Instead use language options such as '*prefer to self-describe*', or '*self-identify*' to mitigate the exclusionary implications of 'othering.'

### Use display/skip logic when possible

In online surveys, utilize display/skip logic to ask more in-depth inclusive questions only of those who select a particular response. For instance, only ask a race/ethnicity demographic question to domestic students who will reflect to those identities and skip this question among international students.

### Provide an opt-out option such as 'prefer not to answer'

There are many reasons a respondent may choose not to answer, such as privacy concerns, distrust, unclarity of identity, or a lack of context to justify a response. Allowing a respondent to affirmatively indicate they do not wish to answer a question respects these feelings and reduces the likelihood that the respondent will exit the survey or provide an inaccurate response due to inadequate response categories.

### Statement of purpose for demographic information

Communicating to respondents why you are collecting demographic information may improve response rates since these questions solicit personal information such as gender identity, sexuality, citizenship/legal status, religion, or socioeconomics. The below is one example of how to briefly provide context and communicate the intent of use of collected demographic information.

#### **Demographic Questions**

The following questions about your identity and background will be kept private and secure. Responses will be used to better understand and serve all student communities at the University of Arizona.

# Inclusive and Functional Demographic Question Considerations

## Purposefully Selecting Demographics to Include

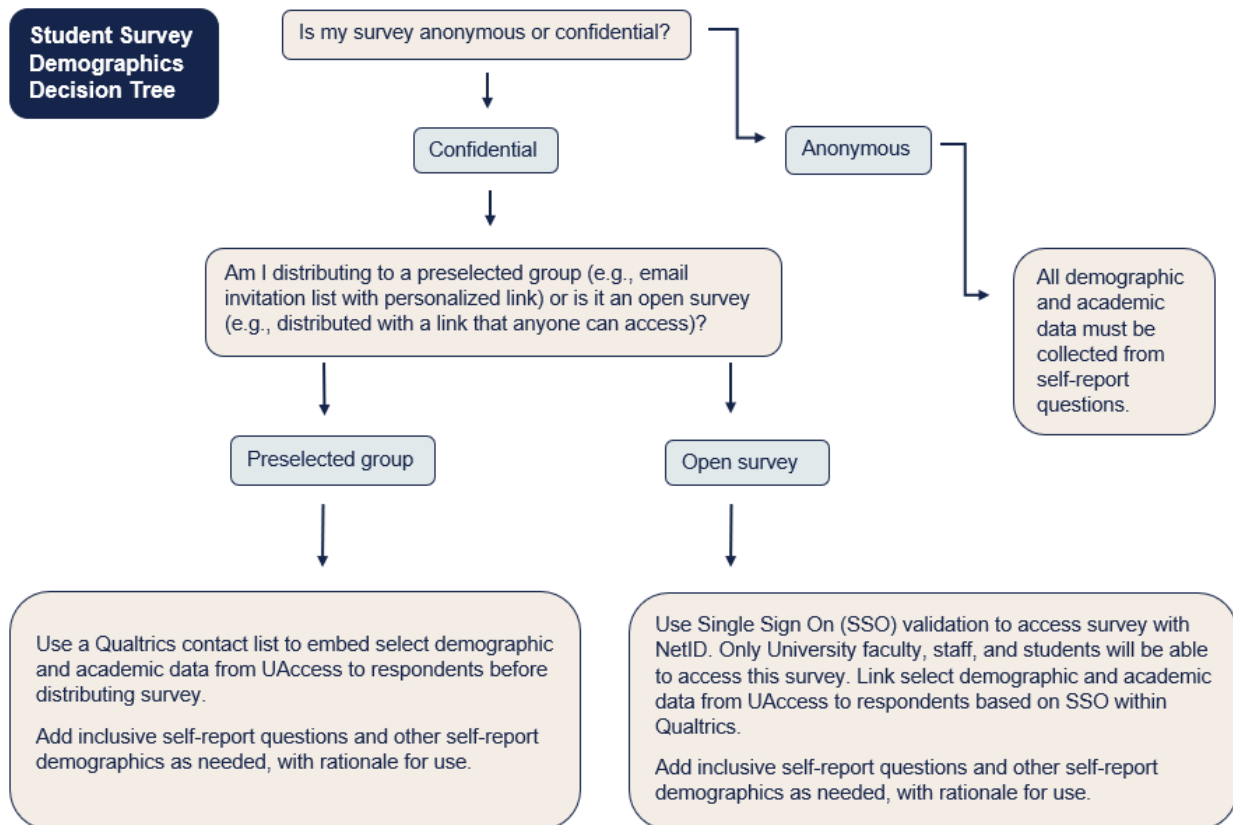
**Demographic questions should only be included if there is an intentional use for them within the data analysis and findings.** Demographics are often used to evaluate response bias to inform generalizability to larger populations, apply survey sample weighting techniques, or to conduct analyses which involve demographics. These analyses then enable the use of findings to improve student experiences and outcomes in equitable ways. Each demographic measure in your survey should have a planned use.

## Confidential vs. Anonymous

Survey platforms offer the option to conduct an anonymous survey where respondent information (email, IP address, location data) is not linked to the responses. Selecting the “Anonymize responses” setting in Qualtrics permanently scrubs a response of identifying information before saving it in the data. However, a truly anonymous survey cannot embed demographics or institutional educational records which reduce question load and provide accurate demographic characteristics tied to responses for future analyses.

## Student Survey Demographics Decision Tree

The diagram below directs to determination on how to ask and/or embed student academic and demographic questions.



## Embedding Demographics from Institutional Data Sources

Avoid asking for academic and demographic characteristics that the university already collects when appropriate. These student characteristics can be embedded within the survey responses as a Contact List or through Single Sign On (SSO) process. Student academic characteristics (GPA) are frequently of interest and already known for each respondent. Similarly, institutional data sources have some demographic identities available that can be embedded in the survey results (residency, age). Keep in mind that some characteristics known to the university may still be best to ask as a self-report in surveys.



Common demographic questions marked with UAccess logo on the following page as a variation of the demographic being captured within UAccess.

If a survey is embedding demographics from institutional data sources, these conditions should be clearly communicated to respondents within the survey privacy statement.

### Commonly Used Demographic Questions

What is your student residency as declared by the University of Arizona?

Residency



- Out-of-state student
- In-state student
- International student
- I don't know

*[Display logic if International]*

With which country are you a citizen of? (Select all that apply)

International country of origin



- List of complete countries as a dropdown box ([See Appendix A](#))
- Another country not listed (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

With which race/ethnicity do you identify? (Select all that apply)

*[Display logic if Out-of-state student, In-state student]*

Domestic student Race/Ethnicity



- African American or Black
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian American or Asian
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian
- White or Caucasian
- I prefer to self-identify as \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer to not answer

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We recognize that the racial/ethnic category you selected encompasses many different nationalities and identities. If interested, please share more about your nationality.

*[Display Logic if Asian American or Asian]*

Asian American or Asian Identity

- Asian Indian
- Bangladeshi
- Cambodian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Hmong
- Indonesian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Lao
- Malaysian
- Pakistani
- Sri Laken
- Taiwanese
- Thai
- Vietnamese
- Another Asian or Asian American identity\_\_\_\_\_

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We recognize that the racial/ethnic category you selected encompasses many different nationalities and identities. If interested, please share more about your nationality.

*[Display Logic if Hispanic or Latinx]*

Hispanic or Latinx Identity

- Mexican American, Mexican, or Chicano/a
- Puerto Rican
- Cuban
- Dominican
- Salvadoran
- Central or South American
- Another Hispanic or Latinx identity\_\_\_\_\_

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We recognize that the racial/ethnic category you selected encompasses many different nationalities and identities. If interested, please share more about your nationality.

*[Display Logic if Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian]*

Pacific Islander Identity

- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian/Chamorro
- Samoan
- Fijian
- Another Pacific Islander identity\_\_\_\_\_

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First-Generation



Have either of your parent(s) or guardians earned a bachelor's degree or higher?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

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Gender



With which gender do you identify? (Select all that apply)

- Female/woman
- Male/man
- Trans Woman
- Trans Man
- Genderqueer or gender nonconforming
- Non-binary
- Agender
- Questioning
- Prefer to self-identify as \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

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Sexual Orientation



Do you consider yourself to be: (Select all that apply)

- Heterosexual or straight
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- Questioning or unsure
- Pansexual
- Prefer to self-identify as \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

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Class

Which social class group do you identify with?

- Wealthy
  - Upper-middle or Professional
  - Middle-class
  - Working-class
  - Low-income or Poor
-

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Pell-recipient  
(Proxy for income)



Have you received a Pell-Grant as part of your financial aid package this year?

- Yes
  - No
  - I don't know
- 

Academic Class  
Standing



What is your academic class standing?

- First Year
  - Sophomore
  - Junior
  - Senior
  - Graduate student
  - Professional student
  - I don't know
- 

*[Display Logic if First  
Year, Sophomore,  
Junior, or Senior]*

Transfer Status



Are you a transfer student from another university or college?

- Yes
  - No
  - I don't know
- 

Living Situation

Which best describes where you currently live?

- On-campus in residence hall or college/university owned apartment or housing
  - Fraternity housing
  - Sorority housing
  - Off-campus residence within walking distance of campus (e.g., apartment or house not owned by university)
  - Off-campus residence outside of walking distance of campus (e.g., apartment or house not owned by university)
  - No stable residence
- 

Student Parent

Are you a primary caregiver for a child or children under age 18?

- Yes
  - No
-

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Adult Caregiver

Are you a primary caregiver for an adult with special care needs?

- Yes
  - No
- 

Academic College



What academic college are you a student with? (Check all that apply)

- College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
  - College of Applied Science & Technology
  - College of Architecture, Planning and Landscape Architecture
  - College of Education
  - College of Fine Arts
  - College of Humanities
  - College of Medicine - Phoenix
  - College of Medicine - Tucson
  - College of Nursing
  - College of Optical Sciences
  - College of Pharmacy
  - College of Science
  - College of Social & Behavioral Sciences
  - College of Veterinary Medicine
  - College of Engineering
  - Colleges of Letters, Arts & Science
  - Eller College of Management
  - Graduate College
  - James E Rogers College of Law
  - Letters Arts & Science Division
  - Zuckerman College of Public Health
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Campus Affiliation



What University of Arizona campus are you affiliated with?

- Main Tucson Campus
  - Arizona Online
  - Distance Education
  - Phoenix Biomedical Campus
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Academic Discipline



Which best describes your academic discipline? (Select all that apply)

- Agriculture and Natural Resources
  - Arts
  - Biological Sciences
  - Business
  - Communications and Journalism
-



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- Education
  - Engineering and Computer Science
  - Health Sciences
  - Humanities
  - Social Sciences
  - Physical Sciences
  - Other Majors or Interdisciplinary
- 

Do you identify as Deaf?

Deaf

- Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer
- 

Do you identify as someone with a disability?

Disability

- Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to respond
- 

Do you identify with any of the following disabilities? (Please select all that apply)

*[Display Logic if Yes]*

Disability

- Attention Deficit (ADD, ADHD)
  - Autism Spectrum
  - Blind / Low Vision
  - Deaf / Hard of Hearing
  - Head Injury (TBI)
  - Health condition (MS, CP, diabetes, arthritis, HIV, etc.)
  - Learning (LD)
  - Mobility
  - Psychological (PTSD, anxiety, depression, etc.)
  - Temporary (injured arm/leg; post-surgery, etc.)
  - A disability not listed above: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Do you identify as a veteran or active member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?

Military-connected / Veteran



- No
  - Yes, Veteran
  - Yes, Active duty
  - Yes, Reserves
-

- 
- Yes, National Guard
  - Prefer not to answer
- 

Are you employed?

Employment

- Yes
  - Not employed but looking for work
  - Not employed and not looking for work
- 

How many jobs do you currently have?

*[Display Logic if Yes]*

Employment:  
Number of Jobs

- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 or more
- 

How many hours do you work in a typical week?

*[Display Logic if Yes]*

Employment:  
Number of hours  
worked

- 1 - 9
  - 10 - 19
  - 20 - 29
  - 30 - 39
  - 40 or more
- 

## Shorter Surveys Increase Response Rates

*Consider asking yes/no questions in this alternative format to help reduce survey length.*

Do you identify with any of the following communities? (Select all that apply)

- LGBTQ+
- Member of a fraternity or sorority
- First generation students (parents did not graduate with a bachelor's degree)
- Undergraduate student
- STEM degree seeking (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)
- Transfer student
- Current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard

## Coding Demographic Questions

The process of coding survey question results is part of the “Collect & Analyze Data” step of the [Assessment Cycle](#). Coding survey questions involves making thoughtful decisions about what numeric value is assigned with the question response items. Survey software (e.g. Qualtrics, Campus Labs) automatically code responses in an ascending numerical order (e.g. 1, 2, 3...6). However, steps need to be taken to determine if variable responses need to be recoded into different or new categories to better support the analysis of data. Once question response items are coded with appropriate numeric values, software (i.e. Excel or Stata) can be used to analyze the data to produce assessment findings and insights.

Demographic questions are commonly recoded for these four reasons:

- **Open-ended responses:** “An identity not listed, self-identify” response option produces write-in responses that need to be categorized
- **Select all that apply questions:** More than one response is selected in multiple choice questions indicated by “Select all that apply” survey prompt
- **Less than ten respondents:** Demographic identity response items have less than ten respondents
- **Collapsing demographic responses:** Data analysis and reporting context supports the need to collapse demographic responses

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### Open-ended responses

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When a respondent adds data to open-ended text box, these need to be manually examined and coded (i.e. ‘An identity not listed, self-identify).

- 1) Write-in responses which are already listed as preset response items should be recoded to the same corresponding numeric value. For example, a respondent who writes in “man” when asked about their gender identity should be coded to the same numeric value for “Man” in the survey question.
- 2) Similar write-in demographic responses should be collapsed together creating a new category. For example, five or more students who write in a religious or spiritual identity which is not listed should be coded as a new response item.
- 3) Remaining responses (i.e. identity groups with less than five respondents) should be collapsed into “Another identity” category and coded with a numeric value.

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### Select all that apply questions

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Demographic questions with the option of selecting multiple response items may need to be recoded depending on the context of the question and need for data analysis.

*Example:* Respondents who mark two or more sexual orientation responses may be recoded as LGBTQ+, which may support data analysis with having one variable response item per respondent. This may not always be the case if your purpose for asking a student’s is to separately understand and communicate the two or more unique identities selected.

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## Less than ten respondents

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To honor confidentiality, it is common practice in survey methodology to not report on demographic response identities if the number of respondents is less than ten. This practice reduces the likelihood of respondents being identified and therefore breaking confidentiality. Survey items with less than ten respondents may be recoded and collapsed into other categories or into a new one.

*Example:* “Transgender”, “non-binary”, and “Genderqueer or gender nonconforming” may be recoded into a new category labeled “Trans\*/Another gender identity” to uphold confidentiality.

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## Collapsing demographic responses

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Assessment of outcomes and corresponding communication of findings may require an aggregated category of student response items.

*Example:* Academic class standing may be better suited for data analysis and reporting by collapsing “First-year”, “Sophomore”, “Junior”, and “Senior” into a new coded category labeled “Undergraduate Students.”

Contact Assessment & Research for additional recommendations on coding guidelines for survey questions at [AssessmentResearch@email.arizona.edu](mailto:AssessmentResearch@email.arizona.edu)

### References:

- ACPA. (2013). *ACPA standards for demographic questions*. Washington, DC. Garvey, J. (2016, August, 10). Personal communication.
- Rankin, S. & Garvey, J. C. (2015). Identifying, quantifying, and operationalizing queer-spectrum and trans-spectrum students: assessment and research in student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services*, 152, 73-84.
- Sanchez, D. T. (2010). How do forced-choice dilemmas affect multiracial people? The role of identity autonomy and public regard in depressive symptoms. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40, 1657–1677.
- Townsend, S. S. M., Markus, H. R., & Bergsieker, H. B. (2009). My choice, your categories: The denial of multiracial identities. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(1), 185–204

## Appendix A: List of International Countries

Afghanistan	Iceland	Singapore
Albania	India	Slovakia
Algeria	Indonesia	South Africa
Angola	Iran	Spain
Australia	Israel	Sri Lanka
Austria	Italy	Sudan
Azerbaijan	Jamaica	Sweden
Bahamas	Japan	Switzerland
Bahrain	Jordan	Syrian Arab Republic
Bangladesh	Kazakhstan	Taiwan
Belgium	Kenya	Tanzania
Belize	Korea, Republic of	Thailand
Bermuda	Kuwait	Togo
Bolivia	Latvia	Trinidad and Tobago
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lebanon	Tunisia
Botswana	Liberia	Turkey
Brazil	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Uganda
Bulgaria	Lithuania	Ukraine
Cambodia	Macao	United Arab Emirates
Cameroon	Madagascar	United Kingdom
Canada	Malawi	Uruguay
Chile	Malaysia	Uzbekistan
China	Mali	Venezuela
Colombia	Mauritania	Viet Nam
Congo	Mauritius	West Bank
Costa Rica	Mexico	Yemen
Croatia	Moldova	Zambia
Cyprus	Mongolia	Zimbabwe
Czech Republic	Morocco	
Denmark	Myanmar	
Dominican Republic	Namibia	
Ecuador	Nepal	
Egypt	Netherlands	
El Salvador	New Zealand	
Equatorial Guinea	Nicaragua	
Estonia	Nigeria	
Ethiopia	Norway	
Finland	Oman	
France	Pakistan	
Gabon	Panama	
Gambia	Paraguay	
Gaza Strip	Peru	
Germany	Philippines	
Ghana	Poland	
Greece	Qatar	
Guatemala	Romania	
Haiti	Russian Federation	
Honduras	Rwanda	
Hong Kong	Saudi Arabia	
Hungary	Serbia	