



Recommendations: collecting information on sex, gender, and sexual orientation

Allowing respondents to indicate their identities gives an organization a clearer picture of the people it serves and can be an indicator of an organization's inclusivity of people across the sex, gender, and sexual orientation spectrums. We offer the following recommendations as emerging best practices.

Collection

As you're considering how to collect information, we encourage you to be clear about what information you need to know and how you will use that information. To consider:

- Organizations may continue collecting information they have 'always collected' without a plan for its use. It is better to not ask unless you have a reason.
- Groups may ask for respondents to disclose specific identities with the plan to ultimately collapse them into "LGBTQ/not LGBTQ." In that case, you may ask the final question in this document.

Protection

In addition, consider how information you collect will travel/be shared or be protected. Respondents will be able to make the best decisions about their own disclosure when they know what happens next with their information. Some phrases you could use in your collection document might include:

- "We use this section to understand the range of communities we serve. Only internal staff see this information and will not share it."
- "This information will go in the notes section of your chart and every person who has your chart access will be able to see it. We train staff to use your name and pronouns as indicated in the chart."
- "Your responses to this section are anonymous. They help us cross-tab our campus climate data to see what people in your communities are experiencing."
- "If our n on this measure is less than 14, we won't report on the data from this identity."





Sex

If you need to know legal sex marker (such as for Title IX reporting):

Legal sex (and give a reason, e.g. *for federal reporting reasons*):

Female

Male

Not listed, please specify: _____

If you need to know sex assigned at birth (such as for a clinical trial):

Sex assigned at birth, on your birth certificate (and indicate how this will or will not be shared, e.g. *only medical professionals will see this information*):

Female

Male

Not listed, please specify: _____

Gender

Best practice is to offer a write-in option:

What is your (if surveying LGBTQ+ communities: *current*) gender?

(please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

You may also choose to offer a two-part ask that allows respondents to elevate their gender and secondarily offer their trans status:

What is your (if surveying LGBTQ+ communities: *current*) gender?

(check all that apply):

Man

Nonbinary

Woman

Not listed, please specify: _____

Prefer not to answer

Are you transgender/do you identify as part of the trans community:

Yes

No

It's complicated/other

Prefer not to answer





Sexual orientation/attraction

Best practices around sexual orientation (depending on metrics; write-in is best):

Sexual orientation:
(please specify) _____
Prefer not to answer

OR

Sexual orientation (check all that apply):
Asexual/ace spectrum
Bisexual/pansexual/fluid
Gay
Lesbian
Queer
Same gender loving
Straight
Two Spirit
Not listed, please specify: _____
Prefer not to answer

Community affiliation

An option for an overall ask is useful when you know you would end up collapsing specific identity categories in your data use. This question protects respondents from more vulnerable disclosure than needed for your work.

Do you identify as part of an LGBTQ+ community?
Yes
No
It's complicated/not sure
Prefer not to answer

Sources and for further information:

Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals. (2014). Suggested Best Practices for Supporting Trans* Students. www.lgbtcampus.org

The GenIUSS Group. (2014). *Best Practices for Asking Questions to Identify Transgender and Other Gender Minority Respondents on Population-Based Surveys*. J.L. Herman (Ed.). Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute.

draft 8/2019

