

# Questions to collect demographic data

This document provides guidance on standard questions for use in surveys and other engagement activity. This is related to data specifically about the protected characteristics of individuals in communities affected by Places for Everyone projects.

Protected characteristics are elements of people's identity for which people with these characteristics are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. These include: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. More characteristics might be added in the future. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of their protected characteristics.

In terms of Places for Everyone not all of the above categories are of equal importance. For example, through your EqIA, you may have identified that relationship status has no significant impact and therefore that question does not need to be asked.

## Protecting the individual: protected characteristics

Protected characteristics can identify an individual. If you might identify individuals with the data you are collecting, you must take steps to protect the data. If you are collecting sensitive data (such as ethnicity or health conditions).

Some respondents may be uncomfortable giving you their demographic data. In general: Give a brief explanation of why you want to collect demographic data before asking any questions about protected characteristics. Explain how the data will be used, the likely benefits, and any relevant risks.

- Put questions about protected characteristics at the end of your survey unless they are a particular focus of your project.
- Include a "Prefer not to say" option.
- Do not make it compulsory to answer demographics questions. An exception to this is age, where we have a responsibility to safeguard children first and foremost.

## Children and safeguarding

Individuals under 16 in Scotland are children and young people. You must ask for parental permission, not individual permission, to collect personal data from children. You must also delete this data sooner than adult data. Any data collection needs to be planned and managed in advance.

Alternatively, you can screen participants by age to ensure children are not asked for personal information. You must **not collect contact details from children and young people**. You should have a safeguarding policy and refer to this if you are carrying out any engagement with children and young people.

## Table 1. Questions to ask about age

Places for Everyone projects should ask questions about age. There are age-specific challenges to travelling actively (see Walking for Everyone and Cycling for Everyone). By collecting data on age, you can improve our understanding of how to deliver our projects to meet the needs of all age groups.

Data should not be collected from under 16s. Online surveys questions can be set so that under 16s cannot progress to further questions to avoid inadvertently collecting data from younger respondents.

Question	Answer categories
<p>1 <b>Which age group do you belong to? (tick one box)</b></p>	<p>Under 18 / 16-17 – <b>only use this category if you want to collect data from children;</b> 18-24;</p> <p>25-34;</p> <p>35-44;</p> <p>45-54;</p> <p>55-64;</p> <p>65 and over;</p> <p>Prefer not to say</p> <p>You might specify more or fewer age groups relevant to your project. In this case, use any five- or ten year age bands that fit with the above boundaries to encompass the ages of your target audience.</p> <p>Example: answer options for a project focusing on people who are retired: 18-54; 55-64; 65 to 74; 75 to 84; 85 and over.</p>

## Table 2. Questions about Disability

Health information is special category data.

We often ask questions about disability. Disabled people may be particularly affected by infrastructure that impairs their mobility, for example uneven surfaces and lack of dropped curbs; narrow cycle infrastructure and gates.

The first two questions are core questions to ask, with the option of requesting more detail with the third. This is relevant in the context of how new infrastructure can impact on people with different impairments.

Under the Equalities Act 2010, disability is defined as lasting 12 months or more. However, in the context of understanding impact on travel choices, it is helpful to know about any condition or illness affecting travel, including those lasting less than 12 months.

Question	Answer categories
<b>Core questions</b>	
1 Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses? (tick one box)	Yes, lasting or expected to last 12 months or more Yes, lasting or expected to last between 1 and 12 months No Prefer not to say
2 Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? (tick one box)	Yes, a lot Yes, a little No Prefer not to say
<b>Additional suggested question if specific information is relevant to your project</b>	
3 Do your conditions or illnesses affect you in any of the following areas? (tick all that apply)	Vision Hearing Mobility and balance Dexterity Learning or understanding or concentrating Memory Mental health Stamina or breathing or fatigue Socially or behaviourally Other (please write in) None of the above Prefer not to say

### Table 3. Questions about gender and gender expression

We rarely ask questions about gender expression.

Only ask question 2 in Table 3 when you have a reason to do so identified through your EqIA

Question	Answer categories
1 <b>What best describes your gender?</b>	Female Male Prefer to self describe (please write in) Prefer not to say
2 <b>Do you identify as trans ?</b>	No Yes Prefer not to say

### Table 4. Questions about sexual orientation:

Sexual orientation is special category data.

Ask only if one or more of the following is true

- Sexual orientation is particularly relevant to your project
- Funders require you to collect sexual orientation information

If your project focuses on sexual orientation, this question might not be detailed enough for you. Research whether to add additional answer options and definitions

Question	Answer categories
1 <b>What best describes your sexual orientation?</b>	Bi Gay/Lesbian Heterosexual/straight Other sexual orientation (please write in) Prefer not to say

## Table 5. Questions about Ethnic group

We often ask for relatively simple ethnicity information with a simplified or short-format ethnicity question. Asking these questions can help identify if we are benefitting who we wanted to benefit, or identify whether we are accessing the opinions of a representative subset of the population. These questions allow analysis of differences of views and needs in relation to walking and cycling between ethnic groups.

If you need more detailed ethnicity information with a long-format ethnicity question – use the most recent census format.

Question	Answer categories
What is your Ethnic group	White (British, Irish, any other white background) Mixed (white and Black Caribbean, white and Black African, white and Asian, any other mixed background) Gypsy, Roma or Traveller Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese Black Caribbean Black African Any other ethnic group Prefer not to say

## Table 6. Questions about relationship status

Places for Everyone projects need not usually ask questions about relationship status. There is little evidence about possible associations between this status and active travel patterns. Use only if marital status is particularly relevant to your project you have identified through your EqlA that there is a direct impact in relation to relationship status.

Question	Answer categories
<b>What best describes your current relationship status? (tick one box)</b>	Never married and never registered in a civil partnership Married In a 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 registered civil partnership Cohabiting Prefer not to say

## Table 7. Questions about religion

Asking questions about religion is particularly important for projects aiming to benefit specific religious communities. However, this is sensitive or special category data, and does not need to be asked for all projects.

Question	Answer categories
<b>What is your religion?</b>	No religion Church of Scotland Roman Catholic Other Christian (please write in) Muslim Hindu Buddhist Sikh Jewish Pagan Any other religion (please write in) Prefer not to say

## Table 8. Question about pregnancy and parenthood

Asking questions about parenthood can provide useful insights because it is associated with different travel patterns and modes of transport. Therefore, collecting this data enables us to improve our understanding of the impact that parenthood has on travel practices. However, generally, we only ask questions about parenthood when relevant to the project or required by the funder. If your project area is likely to impact families, you might wish to ask further questions for additional context, for example around the number and age of children.

Question	Answer categories
<b>1 In the last 12 months, have any of the following affected your travel arrangements?</b>	Pregnancy Parental leave None of the above Prefer not to say
<b>2 If yes, please expand below</b>	Free text box (Please write in)

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This guidance has been developed for Places for Everyone partners to support with data collection in engagement, surveying and consultation activity.

It is adapted from internal guidance produced by Sustrans Research and Monitoring Unit. If you would like to access more detailed guidance on data collection, please contact [jess.acton@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:jess.acton@sustrans.org.uk). Or for further support on your engagement activity, please contact [rachel.goater@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:rachel.goater@sustrans.org.uk).