



PolicyWise
BUILD BETTER DATA

Project Approach

February 2021
PolicyWise for Children & Families



SSHRC  CRSH



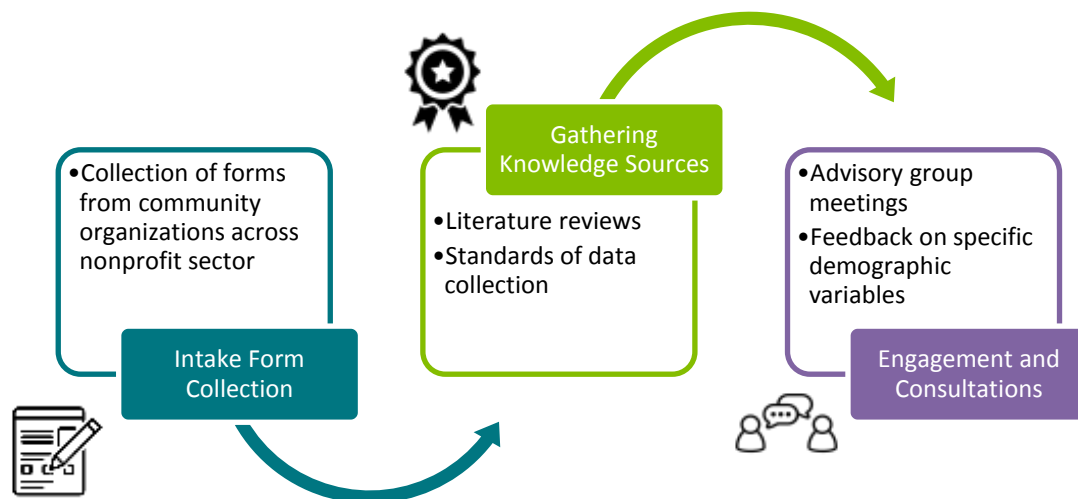
The Demographic Datapedia

Having good information about the people who access services and programs in nonprofits is critical to:

- Better understand and serve clients
- Measure and communicate organizational impact
- Strategic planning
- Coordinating services
- Reporting impact

The Datapedia is a resource that organizations can use to explore, understand, and implement the most appropriate demographic data collection for their clients and organizations.

How Were the Datapedia Entries Developed?



To create the content and diagrams for variable responses, several steps were taken:

- Organization intake and registration forms from nonprofit subsectors across Alberta.
- Best practices in data collection, academic literature of demographic data, and resources from data aggregators (e.g., Statistics Canada, National Institutes of Health).

Findings from these sources were synthesized and organized across three levels of response options: basic, detailed, and comprehensive to create the diagrams for response variables.

Importantly, the suggestions and details of the response options will need to be revisited and revised periodically to reflect shifts and changes that may emerge in various variables over time.¹

¹ Frederick, J. K. (2020). Four strategies for crafting inclusive and effective demographic questions. *Ithaka S+R Blog*. <https://sr.ithaka.org/blog/four-strategies-for-crafting-inclusive-and-effective-demographic-questions/>

First, over 50 intake and registration forms from over about 30 social-purpose/nonprofit organizations were reviewed to **determine whether and how they collected data related to clients' identifying attributes, demographic details, as well as clients' needs**. Questions that were similar to each other were summarized into a single question that captured relevant nuances.

Next, the response sets for questions were reviewed and collated. Specific attention was paid to:

- Was there a single answer or multiple answers to the question?
- What was the generality and specificity of each answer?
- How inclusive was each set of answers?

In parallel, **secondary sources** such as Statistics Canada, National Institute for Health (NIH), and other government resources were searched for recognized standards in capturing demographic concepts. Questions and response options were adjusted to reflect the current understanding of the concept.

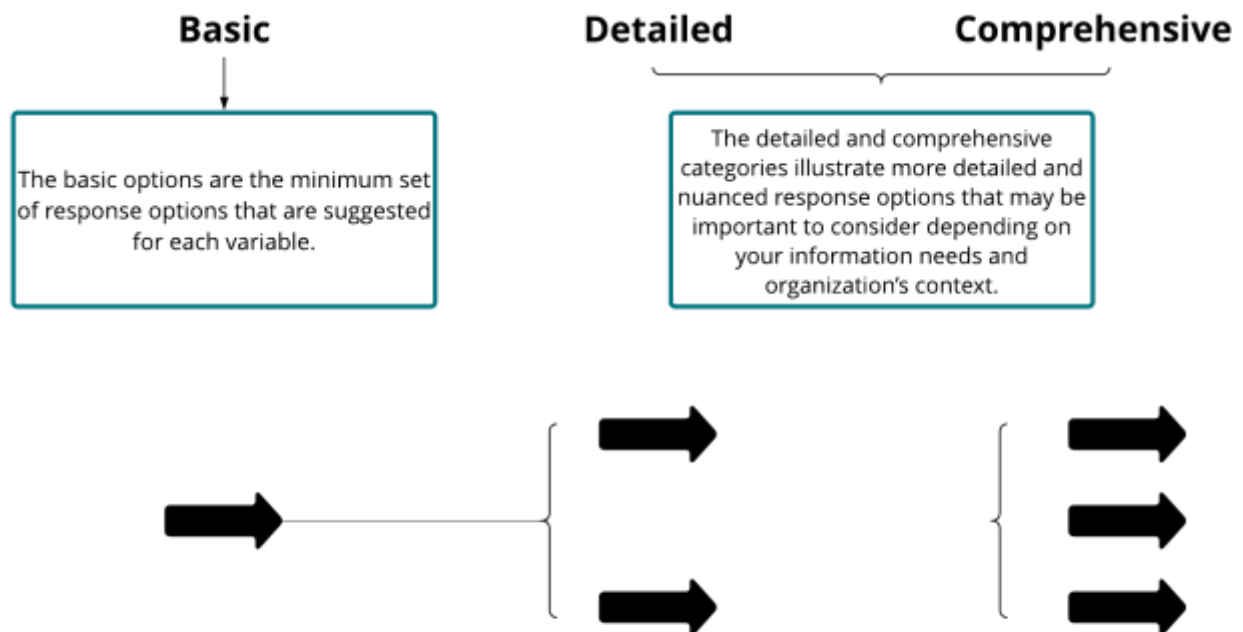
This work was followed by review and consultation with partners and experts from our nonprofit partners.

How to Use the Datapedia

Each Datapedia entry begins with definition(s) of the demographic variable followed by some considerations and limitations of the variable for understanding populations of people.

Next, a suggested question(s) and response options are shown to the reader. Note that this is given as guidance rather than a prescription of what's best as that will depend on the information needs and context of your organization. Also included are ideas and examples of how to ask questions about the demographic variable in conversation.

Finally, a diagram was made for each question to illustrate basic, detailed, and comprehensive response options for the variable.



The diagram of response options show how each category can be collapsed into the basic set of answers. For example, the detailed and comprehensive response options can be collapsed or aggregated into the basic response options for analysis.

Importantly, the suggestions and details of the response options will need to be revisited and revised periodically to reflect shifts and changes that may emerge in various variables over time.¹

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Primary Contributors

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Sharing Guidelines

It is the hope of all those who contributed to this project that these findings are shared and used to benefit others and inform policy and practice to improve child, family and community well-being.

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