

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONNAIRES

What are they?

Self-identification questionnaires are a series of socio-demographic questions that invite members to share information about their race, gender, disabilities, immigration status, and more. They can be in a stand-alone questionnaire or included as part of a survey on bargaining or another topic.

Why do we need them?

Collecting self-identification data is critical to advancing human rights and equity within a workplace or union.

The results of these questionnaires can help identify bargaining priorities among equity-deserving groups, and they help to serve four main goals:

1. Recognizing and removing discriminatory practices and barriers.
2. Increasing representation and diversity within the organization.
3. Monitoring the organization's employment equity plan and performance.
4. Ensuring that human rights and equity are built into all levels of the organization which may require a change in workplace culture.

Common questions and concerns


Understandably, members may have some questions or concerns when being asked to answer surveys about how they self-identify. It's important to build trust in the surveys by ensuring members know that their information is secure and that it will only be used to advance human rights and equity in the local. Some common questions include:

- Is this survey confidential?
- How will this information be used?
- Who owns the data? Where and how will the data be stored?
- How will this information be used to remove barriers to equity-deserving groups?
- How will the survey results be made relevant or meaningful?

Here is a sample privacy notice that addresses some of these questions:

Information collected from this survey is confidential and will be stored safely. This information will be used for statistical analysis, strategy development, and measurement of progress in advancing CUPE's goals, including employment equity goals. Only authorized personnel will have access to the information you provide in accordance with the applicable *[insert relevant privacy act legislation here]*. All reports based on this information are aggregated so that no individual can be identified. This information will not be used for purposes other than those noted above. If you have any questions, contact *[add survey administrator contact info]*.





Your local can be proactive in addressing possible concerns by taking steps to increase representation of equity-deserving groups on the local executive, by reviewing privacy policies and ensuring that members have the information they need to feel confident completing these surveys. Based on the survey results, your local could consider creating diversity or equity seats on the local executive, creating a Racial Justice Committee or an Indigenous Council, adding bargaining clauses in collective agreements to meet the needs of equity-deserving groups or other steps to increase representation.

Tips to consider

- Include clear instructions on how to complete the survey.
- Consider your questions carefully. Having the same questions over multiple years allows your local to accurately compare answers over time. However, language and discourse on employment equity, human rights and anti-oppression evolves and changes over time and it's good to update self-identification or socio-demographic questions to reflect those changes.
- Are your questions open ended? If not, consider how can they allow for nuance in diversity. For example, gender identification and disabilities don't always fit into specific categories. Consider having blank spaces such as "Other" or "Please Specify" for members to write in how they specifically self-identify.
- A person's identity can change over time. Give members the option to update their information if the way they self-identify changes after they've submitted their responses.
- Include two types of questions: 1) broader questions about demographic groups that can give you a broad overview, and 2) questions that ask more detail about members' identities for a deeper understanding of your membership. For example, an answer to a broader question would be "I am a Black person." Answers to more detailed questions could include Black, African, Black Caribbean, African American, or African Canadian.
- The five equity-deserving groups recognized by CUPE are: women, Black and racialized people, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQI+ people. CUPE also has members with temporary immigration status. Your local may want to include questions about citizenship or immigration status to include these workers who are discriminated against on this basis.

Every member has a role to play in building an anti-racist CUPE. When Indigenous, Black and racialized members get together to connect, support each other, and organize, it strengthens our union.

Check out the other tip sheets in this toolkit and learn more about how you can get involved in our union's Anti-Racism Strategy: cupe.ca/antiracism.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Here are some samples of self-identification questions you can use if you have limited space.

Please check all that apply

- A. I am an Indigenous person (First Nations, Métis or Inuit) ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer
- B. I am a Black person ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer
- C. I am a racialized person ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer
- D. I am a person with a disability or disabilities ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer
- E. I am a member of the 2SLGBTQI+ community (Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, or other identities not listed here) ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer
- F. I prefer to self-describe or I want to add the following information: _____

Gender refers to your current gender, which may be different from your sex assigned at birth and from what is indicated on your legal documents.

What is your gender? Please check all that apply

- ☐ Woman ☐ Man ☐ Intersex ☐ Trans
- ☐ Two-Spirit ☐ Non-binary/Genderqueer ☐ Prefer not to answer ☐ I prefer to self-describe: _____

Here are some more detailed questions if your local wants to have a standalone questionnaire and gather more detailed information.

Racialized workers are people in Canada (other than Indigenous peoples) who are non-white in colour or non-Caucasian in race, regardless of their place of birth or citizenship.

Race is a social construct and is a made-up system of classification based on physical, behaviour or other traits, not biological fact. Among other things, race was created to justify slavery, forced labour, and owning human beings as property.

Ethnicity is a group/identity based on shared culture, religion or language.

Nationality is based on membership to a nation-state defined by (sometimes arbitrary or colonial) borders.

While the question below focuses on being a racialized worker, it includes options of race, ethnicity and nationality because these intersect and can affect barriers or privileges experienced by members. Encouraging members to give more detail in the "Other/Specify" line can give greater insight into members' lived experiences.

Do you consider yourself a racialized worker?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer

How do you describe your race or ethnicity? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Black, African, Black Caribbean, African Canadian
- ☐ Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, Inuit
- ☐ Latinx, Latin American, South American, Central American
- ☐ Asian, Asian Canadian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander
- ☐ Arab, Arab Canadian, Middle Eastern, North African, SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa)
- ☐ White, White Canadian, or White European
- ☐ Other/Specify: _____
- ☐ I prefer to not answer

Understanding the languages your membership speaks can be helpful in better connecting with members. Providing translated materials can also reach and better support members who are newcomers or migrant workers.

What languages do you speak? *Select all that apply.*

- | | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> German | <input type="checkbox"/> Oromo | <input type="checkbox"/> Tagalog (Filipino) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Inuktitut | <input type="checkbox"/> Punjabi | <input type="checkbox"/> Ukrainian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian | <input type="checkbox"/> Somali | <input type="checkbox"/> Urdu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindi | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> Others/Specify: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cree languages | <input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Swahili | |

CUPE has more workers with temporary immigration status than ever before. With the 2024–2025 immigration changes, CUPE members with temporary immigration status – who are often Black or racialized workers – are facing challenges like precarious work status, expiring work permits and risks of deportation. Understanding which CUPE members have precarious immigration status can enable your local to support these members and foster greater union solidarity.

What is your current citizenship or residency status? Are you:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Canadian citizen | <input type="checkbox"/> A permanent resident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program | <input type="checkbox"/> An international student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working under the Post Graduation Work Program | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer | |

Indigenous, Black and racialized workers who are also women, 2SLGBTQI+, disabled and migrant workers can face compounded discrimination and barriers in unions and at work. Remember to include questions about disabilities/abilities and gender diversity.

Do you identify as any of the following? *Select all that apply.*

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Man | <input type="checkbox"/> Gay | <input type="checkbox"/> Trans | <input type="checkbox"/> Intersex | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two-Spirit | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian | <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual | <input type="checkbox"/> Queer | <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to self-describe: _____ | |

Do you consider yourself a worker with a disability?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer

If yes, please specify:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf or culturally deaf | <input type="checkbox"/> Low vision/vision disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Neurodivergent | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard of hearing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health-related disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary/episodic disability | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health challenge | <input type="checkbox"/> Some other disability not listed | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |

Have you requested an accommodation at work due to your disability/disabilities?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer

If yes, did you receive one? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to answer