Good Question Design

Jessie Ashmore, Account Manager
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Data is the destination

Your questions affect your data

The better the question, the more useful the data.

How do I design a good question?

- Context and information

- Appropriate language

- Required vs. Optional questions

- Qualitative or quantitative data

- Choosing the answer component

- Demographic questions

- Test it

Inform and explain at the point of response

Police Priorities in your Community

1. Do you agree or disagree with point A?

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ No opinion

Further comments:

Police Priorities in your Community

This page allows you to provide feedback on our current policing priorities, which service you value most and where we can improve.

1. Do you agree or disagree with point A?

▶ [Information on point A](#)

○ Agree

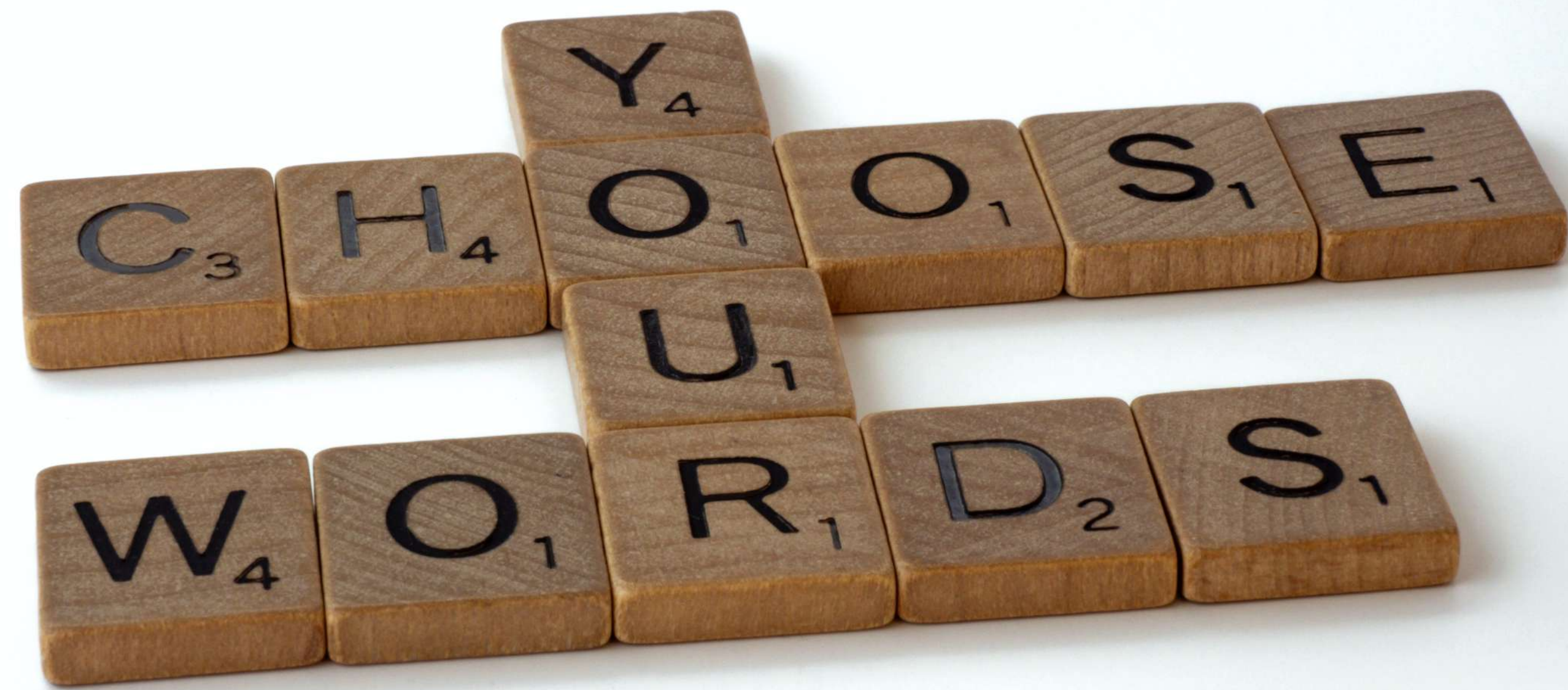○ Disagree

○ No opinion

Further comments:

Information and explanation

- Make the most of your activity overview page

- Define all acronyms and abbreviated words

- Include all relevant information alongside your questions

Words and language

"The choice of words and phrases in a question is critical in expressing the meaning and intent of the question to the respondent and ensuring that all respondents interpret the question the same way. Even small wording differences can substantially affect the answers people provide."

Please confirm your age group after your last birthday.

How old are you?

Hemingway App makes your writing bold and clear.

The app highlights lengthy, complex sentences and common errors; if you see a yellow sentence, shorten or split it. If you see a red highlight, your sentence is so dense and complicated that your readers will get lost trying to follow its meandering, splitting logic — try editing this sentence to remove the red.

You can utilize a shorter word in place of a purple one. Mouse over them for hints.

Adverbs and weakening phrases are helpfully shown in blue. Get rid of them and pick words with force, perhaps.

Phrases in green have been marked to show passive voice.

You can **format** your *text* with the toolbar.

Paste in something you're working on and edit away. Or, click the Write button and compose something new.

Hemingway Editor

Readability

Grade 6
Good

Words: **133**

Show More ▾

2 adverbs, meeting the goal of 2 or fewer.

1 use of passive voice, meeting the goal of 2 or fewer.

1 phrase has a simpler alternative.

1 of 11 sentences is hard to read.

1 of 11 sentences is very hard to read.

Using the **right** words

- Different words, different things, different people

- Use the simplest version of a word and the question

- Understand your target audience first

- Remain consistent throughout

- Be clear and concise

Consider avoiding

Ambiguous

Absolute

Biased or leading

Double barrelled

Unnecessary

Double barrelled

Don't use:

What do you think of our product and service?

Use:

What do you think of our product?

And

What do you think of our service?

Biased or leading questions

Don't use:

What do you think of the improvements to our service?

Use:

What do you think of the **changes** to our service?

Ambiguous

Don't use:

What do you think about this consultation?

Use:

How did you find this survey tool?

Or

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal set out in the consultation document?

Absolute

Don't use:

Do you ride your bike to work every day?

Use:

How often do you ride your bike to work?

Or

How do you commute to work?
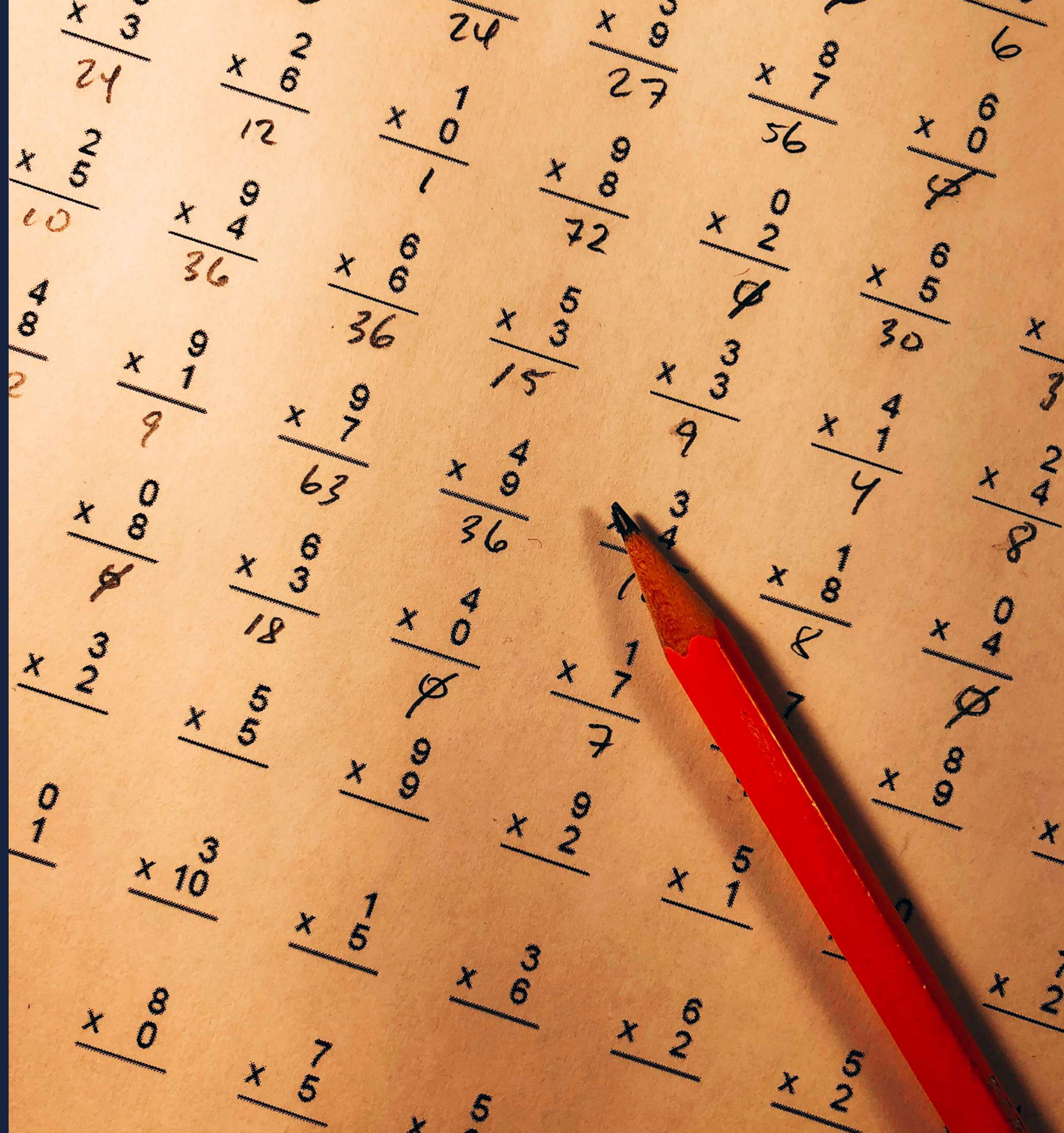
Required or optional

Does this question need to be required?

- Start with the data

- How many other questions in my survey need to be required?

- Can I explain why this question is required?

- Make demographic questions required only where the data is necessary

- Required questions can alienate respondents

Opportunities To Respond

Types of answer component

Asking quantitative (closed) questions

5. How important is this priority to you?

○ Very important

○ Somewhat important

○ Neither important or unimportant

○ Not very important

○ Not important at all

Use the radio button component for all questions where only one option should be chosen

Asking quantitative (closed) questions

6. Please select all the modes of transport you have used to travel around this area in the last month

- ☐ Walk
- ☐ Run
- ☐ Cycle
- ☐ Motorcyle
- ☐ Electric Scooter
- ☐ Car
- ☐ Bus
- ☐ Train
- ☐ Other

The checkbox component should be used for all questions where you want the respondent to be able to select more than one option

Asking quantitative (closed) questions

7. We want to understand how often you use the following facilities in the local area

	Every day	Every week	More than once a month	Once a month	Once every few months	Twice a year	Less than once per year
Bubbles leisure centre	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Coffee 'n' Chill community cafe	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Read 'em And Weep Library	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Grosstons park public toilets	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Asking qualitative (open) questions

4. Please list any other issues that you think should be included within this priority.

Qualitative (open) questions

Use open questions for:

- Feedback
- Suggestions
- Comments
- Giving further details following a closed question
- Evidence and personal stories

Top tip from Delib: Give guidance about what you are looking to hear about to keep respondents on track

Quantitative (closed) questions

Use closed questions for:

- Multiple choice questions
- Ranking options or preferences
- Select one answer - radio buttons
- Select all that apply - checkbox
- When you don't have much time for analysis

Top tip from Delib: Make sure you provide all possible options so a respondent isn't forced to give an incorrect answer or give space for them to specify 'other'

A good question is...

quantitative (closed) where it **can** be and **qualitative** (open) where **needs** it to be

Demographic questions

Location

Ethnicity

Sex

Race

Demographic questions

Age

Gender

Religion

Research indicates that people have a hard time keeping more than 4/5 choices in mind at one time.

When the question is asking about an objective fact and/or demographics, such as the religious affiliation of the respondent, more categories can be used.

In fact, they are encouraged to ensure inclusivity.

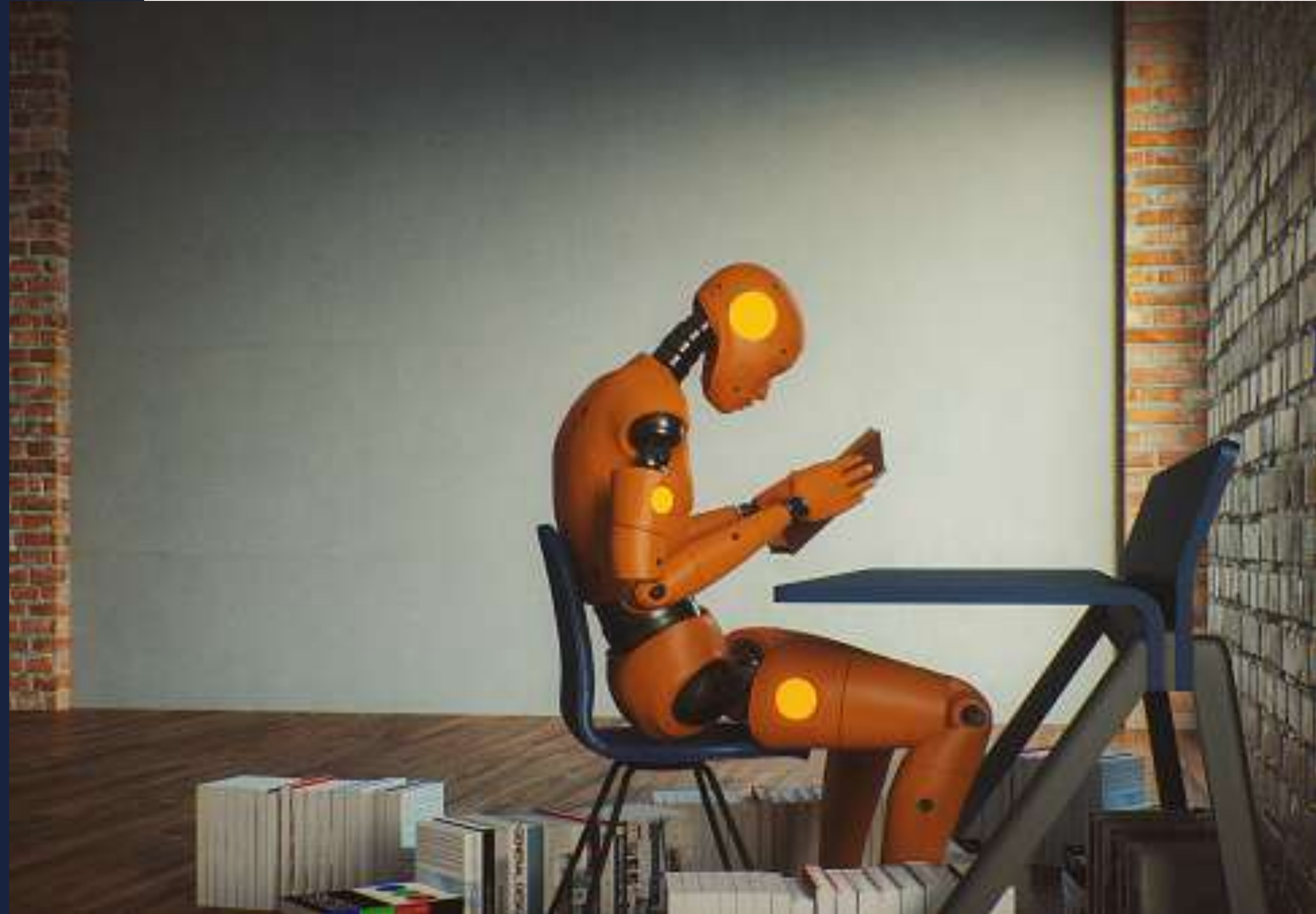# Asking demographic questions

How granular does my data need to be?

↓

Can I group my answers into ranges?

↓

Identify a set of multiple choice options and provide a single line text if your list isn't exhaustive

Test it out

Good question checklist

For each question you create:

- Have I provided clear instructions and information to ensure informed responses?

- Have I used familiar language aimed at my audience?

- Do any of the words used have another meaning or can they be simplified?

- Are my questions written clearly and to the point?

- Does this question need to be required?

Answer component checklist

For each component you add:

- If my component is quantitative, have I included all possible options?

- Are the options clear?

- If appropriate, have I included an 'n/a' option?

- Do I want to hear more from the respondents? Do I need to give space for further comments with a qualitative component?

- Context and information
- Appropriate language
- Required/optional questions
- Qualitative or quantitative data
- Choosing the answer component
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Resources

- [Good Survey Design webinar on Delib Learn](#)

- [The Hemingway App](#)

- [Citizen Space: Answer components - what are the different answer components for questions?](#)

- [Citizen Space: Required questions - how do I make it a requirement for a question to be answered?](#)

- [Citizen Space: Radio Buttons vs. Checkboxes - what's the difference?](#)

- [Testing an activity before it goes live](#)

- [Citizen Space: the preview link](#)

Style guides

Follow guidance from your government and department resources

- Australian Government style guide

- New Zealand Government style guide

- UK Government style guide