

# An employeesurveys.com Tip

## Why Ask Demographic Questions in an Employee Satisfaction Survey?

We almost always include demographic questions in our questionnaires, including employee surveys. This is not merely nosiness on our part. (If we were truly nosy, we would ask about much more controversial things!) These questions serve two main purposes:

1. To see how closely the sample replicates the known population. The more closely the demographic distribution of survey respondents matches the population, the more confidence you can have in the data.
2. To allow analysis of sub-groups of those responding to the survey.

It is this second purpose, analysis of sub-groups, which provides the most utility. If the sample size is small (less than 100 or so), this cannot be done. However, with larger sample sizes, an analysis of sub-groups can tell you things that would be missed by looking at the aggregate data. For example, you might find that 10% of employees would rate the health care plan provided by your firm as "poor." You might be tempted to conclude that you do not have a major problem in this area. However, if you were to drill down into the data and find that 30% of employees with children rated the health care plan as "poor," you would have a potentially serious issue on your hands.

Questionnaire length usually limits the number of demographic questions you can include in your survey. The type of industry you are in, and the composition of your work force will influence the particular items you choose to include. Below is a list of the types of demographic questions you should consider including in your employee satisfaction questionnaire.

- Age,
- Sex,
- Marital status,
- Number of children present in the household,
- Length of time employed by the firm,
- Exempt or non-exempt (or managerial or clerical, etc.),
- Department (if the sample is very large),
- Annual income (in broad ranges).

It is not necessary to include all of the above questions in the survey. The key in selecting the items to include is determining, to the extent possible, the variable that you believe will segment the population in a manner such that the different segments will have different needs and/or feelings about the organization.

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