

Are Demographics the Right Way to Humanize Your Story?



Introduction

Traditionally demographic questions like age, gender, marital status, income, education, employment, ethnicity, and race (in the US) have been used to screen consumers to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives as well as to bring research results to life by characterizing the people that participate in research studies. Getting demographic questions right is critical to delivering impactful insights while allowing people that participate in research to feel to feel represented and respected when expressing their identity. If not, as The Insights Association's IDEA Council recently shared, "When the demographic questions included in a study are not inclusive- or could even be perceived as offensive- important findings may be missed."



The Challenge

As researchers how can we?

- Ensure inclusivity of diverse voices
- Improve the experience of people taking our studies
- Humanize and bring people's stories to life in our insight reports

Do You Need to ask Demographic Questions? Are they genuinely needed for your research project?



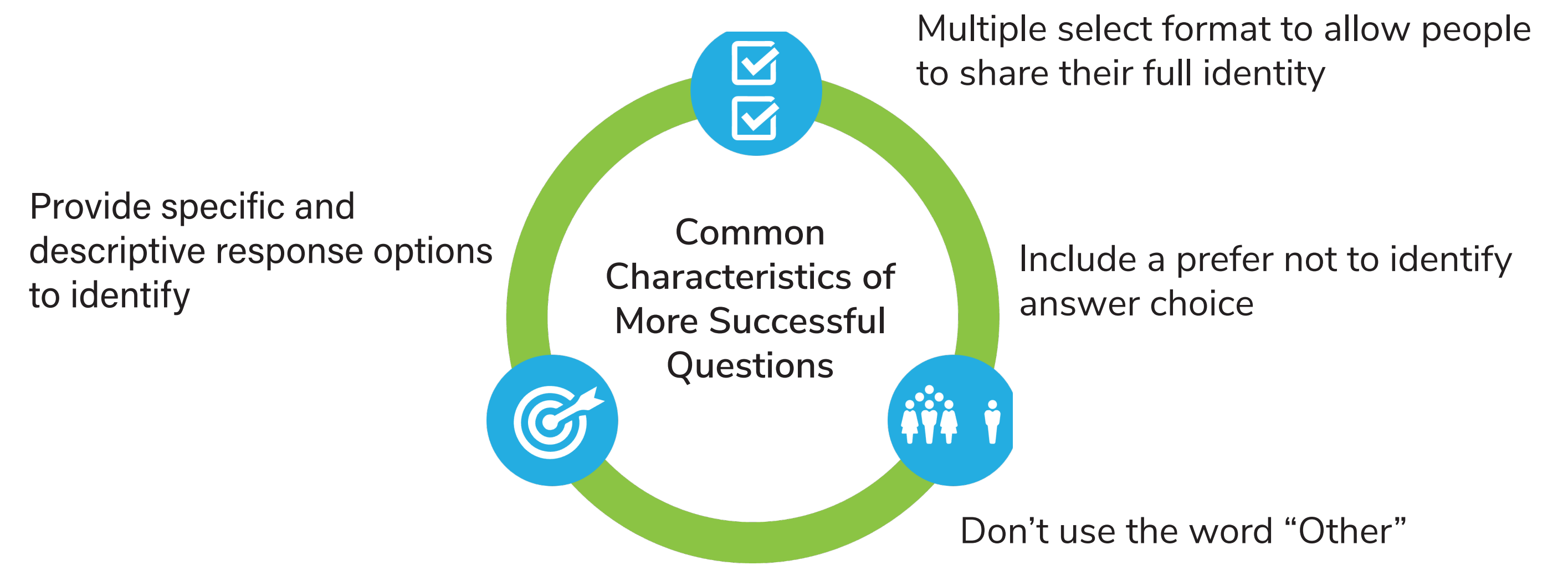
Don't Ask Demographics
How do I better humanize my story without demographics?



How to best ask Demographic Questions more Inclusively and Sensitive

- If you need to ask sensitive questions, **explain why you are asking.**
- Stop Othering. Use language such as "I prefer to self-identify (Please specify)" with open-ended write-in options, rather than "Other (Please specify)."
- Placement of sensitive questions. If a question is sensitive and not needed for a screener, **consider putting it at the end of the questionnaire.**
- **Allow people to skip** or opt out of the question with a "Prefer not to answer" response option.

How to improve the respondent experience when asking about identity



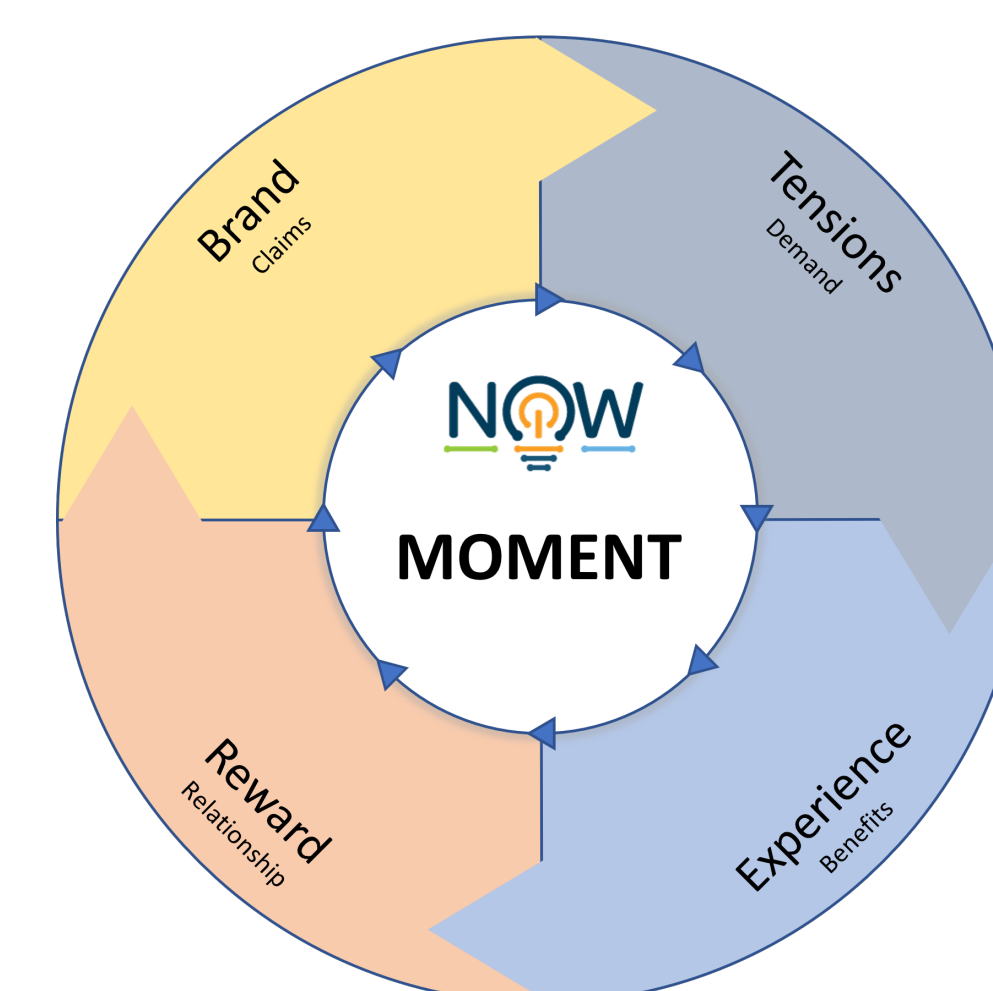
Behavior-based Alternatives

- Humanize your participants and
- Bring your research story to life while ensuring inclusivity of diverse voices

By focusing on the moments people are in, the tensions they face, and the factors that impact their choices you create a stronger human connection than with demographic information. Limit your use of demographics and heighten your use of behavioral information in order to include diverse voices, improve the experience of the people in your research, and create greater empathy with the listener when you tell their stories.

Ask people about their...

- Motivations
- Values
- Emotions/Feelings/Moods
- Tensions
- Aspirations
- Memories
- Context and Occasions



...related to your research challenge.

A **moment** is the context of engagement with a brand or product.

A moment has an environmental component (the occasion), a personal component (goals), and a perceptual component (motivators).

These motivators influence choice and product performance.

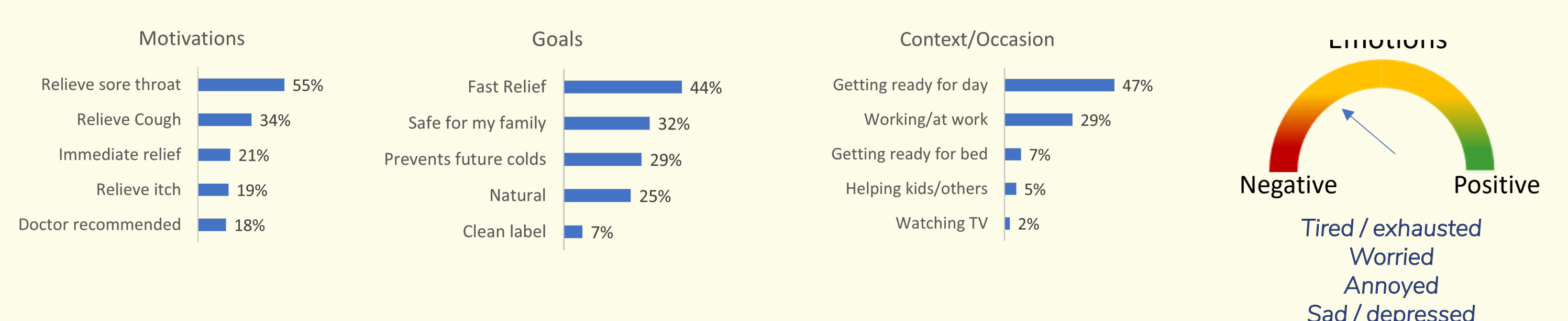
Study Details:

In partnership with the Insights Association IDEA Council, InsightsNow conducted research leading to best practices on how to ask demographic questions in a more inclusive and sensitive way.

- US (2022)
- UK, Australia, India, Brazil and Japan (2023)

Coming Soon: Recommendations from research on how to best ask Gender and Sexual Orientation Demographic Questions

Moment Example: Experiencing Cold Symptoms looking for relief from specific symptom when general health is the goal



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