



## Student Census - Questions Guide

### QUESTION 1: LANGUAGES

**Why is this asked?** - We ask about students' first languages and languages most spoken at home to use language data to identify program needs and ensure that information from schools is communicated in languages that are understood at home. The languages listed in the question are provided in order of most reported languages in HWDSB schools and Ontario in the 2016 Census.

### QUESTION 2: INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

**Why is this asked?** - As mandated by the Anti-Racism Act, school boards must collect student information about Indigenous identity to help identify, understand, monitor and address Indigenous peoples' unique experiences of systemic racism and marginalization resulting from a history of colonialism and the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Understanding the distinct experiences of Indigenous students should also recognize that anti-racism for indigenous people is distinct from anti-colonialism. Anti-colonialism is broader than anti-racism because it includes recognition of Indigenous peoples' inherent rights and sovereignty, constitutionally protected Aboriginal and Treaty rights, and right to self-determination in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Collecting personal information about Indigenous identity in the manner described below (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) is consistent with the approach undertaken by the Anti-racism Data Standards, in which "First Nations" includes status and non-status Indians. Collecting this information contributes to the school board's commitment to identify and eliminate anti-Indigenous racism in programs, services, and outcomes. Collecting Indigenous identity through the student census is different from and is not meant to replace the existing Indigenous self-identification program at HWDSB. While the later collects individual information including name to be able to plan specific programs, the student census focuses more on identifying broader and systemic gaps and trends in relation to the broader student population. (Source: [Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism \(ontario.ca\)](#))



## QUESTION 3: ETHNICITY

**Why is this asked?** As mandated by the Anti Racism Act, school boards must collect student information about ethnic origin to help identify, understand and monitor systemic racism, marginalization and disparities in outcome that people may experience based on ethnic origin. Ethnic origin refers to a person's ethnic or cultural origins. Ethnic groups have a common identity, heritage, ancestry, or historical past, often with identifiable cultural, linguistic, and/or religious characteristics. Perceived differences based on ethnic origin may be racialized and lead to adverse impacts and unequal outcomes. In addition, there may be ethnic differences in experiences of systemic racism within and between racial groups. Identifying distinct ethno-cultural needs helps to develop and provide culturally responsive programs and services.

The ethnic origins listed in the question are provided in order of most commonly reported single ethnic origins in Ontario in the 2016 Census. They include examples of Indigenous origins and commonly reported ethnic origins from each world region. (Source: [Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism \(ontario.ca\)](#))

## QUESTION 4: RACE

**Why is this asked?** As mandated by the Anti Racism Act, school boards must collect student information about their racial identity for the purpose of identifying, monitoring and addressing systemic racism, including how people may be racialized and may experience inequitable treatment or access to programs and services. Systemic racism is shaped by how society categorizes individuals into racial groups. Race is a social construct, not a reflection of personal identity (as distinct from individual, ethnic or cultural identity). Using race categories that measure and reflect how an individual may be described by others helps to better identify Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities' experiences and treatment in society.

Race is different from ethnic group and religion. People are often described as belonging to a certain "race" based on how others see and behave toward them. These ideas about who belongs to what race are usually based on physical features such as skin colour. Ideas about race are often imposed on people by others in ways which can affect their life experiences and how they are treated. Race as a social category is distinct from but may overlap with how people identify themselves, which can be much more varied and complex.



The race categories in this question are commonly used as social descriptors in Ontario. They are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has created (i.e. is 'socially constructed'.) (Source: [Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism \(ontario.ca\)](#))

## QUESTION 5: RELIGION AND/OR SPIRITUAL AFFILIATION

**Why is this asked?** As mandated by the Anti Racism Act, school boards must collect student information about religion to identify, monitor and address systemic racism and disparities in outcomes that people may experience on the basis of their religion. Religion refers to an individual's self-identification or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, or other religiously defined community or system of belief and/or spiritual faith practices. People can be treated differently based on their religion, or perceived religion, which can lead to negative impacts and unequal outcomes. In addition, there may be differences in experiences of systemic racism within and between religious groups. Islamophobia and antisemitism are examples of the way religion can be racialized. People can experience racism not only based on skin colour but also other perceived characteristics that are associated with religion. (Source: [Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism \(ontario.ca\)](#))

## QUESTION 6: GENDER IDENTITY

**Why is this asked?** Stereotypes and prejudice based on gender and gender identity are common and contribute to negative and discriminatory outcomes in schools. Collecting student information about gender identity helps to identify, monitor and address systemic discrimination and disparities in outcomes that students may experience on the basis of their gender, gender identity and gender expression. Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense or feeling of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere on the gender spectrum, which may or may not be the same as the person's sex assigned at birth (e.g. male, female, intersex). Gender identity is different from and does not determine a person's sexual orientation.

## QUESTION 7 (5 -12): SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**Why is this asked?** Stereotypes and prejudice based on sexual orientation are common and might contribute to negative experiences and discriminatory outcomes in school. Sexual orientation refers to a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to people of the same or a different gender, or lack thereof. Collecting student information about sexual orientation helps to identify, monitor and address systemic discrimination and disparities in outcomes that student may experience on the basis of their sexual orientation.



## QUESTION 8 (5 -12)/ QUESTION 7 (K-4)-: DISABILITY

**Why is this asked?** Students with disabilities continue to face challenges accessing education. Collecting student information about disabilities helps to identify, monitor and address systemic discrimination and disparities in services and outcomes that students may experience on the basis of their disabilities.

Some people identify as having a disability because of a permanent or long-term health condition that makes it difficult for them to function in an environment that is not fully inclusive and accessible. A person's disability may be diagnosed or not diagnosed. It may be hidden or visible. Some students who have disabilities may have a special plan at school to help them (an Individual Education Plan or IEP), but some do not. A disability may be physical, mental, behavioural, developmental, sensory, communicational or a combination of any of these. Barriers such as settings that are hard to access (like school, shops or public places), negative attitudes, and barriers to information contribute to a person's experience of having a disability.

## QUESTION 9 (5 -12)/ QUESTION 8 (K-4)-: STATUS IN CANADA

**Why is this asked?** - Students who are not born in Canada, and/or are newcomers or immigrants face different challenges accessing education. Collecting student information about their status in Canada and how that may intersect with their experiences in school helps to identify, monitor and address systemic discrimination and disparities in services and outcomes that students may experience on the basis of their immigration status and place of birth.

### Questions?

We are inviting and answering questions as we prepare for the census. Please learn more on our website [www.hwdsb.on.ca/weallcount](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/weallcount), where you will find Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the census as questions arise. You can also contact our student census team at [census@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:census@hwdsb.on.ca).