



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**



Advice on writing custom questions

Examples and rules on writing custom questions in your survey.

Writing a custom opinion question

Your organisation can include up to 5 custom opinion questions and 1 custom demographic question in your survey.

You should only use custom questions if the area you want results on isn't already covered in the [People matter survey questions](#).

Custom opinion questions should aim to provide your organisation with additional information to supplement your People matter survey action planning.

If you had a custom opinion question in last year, review the results and consider:

- Did this question give my organisation the information we needed?
- Does my organisation need information on a different topic or to change the focus of the custom question?

Review the list of rules and examples below before writing your custom question.

Custom opinion question examples and rules

Rule	Examples
Only ask about one thing at a time; don't bundle multiple aspects together.	This example is bad as it asks about two concepts 'senior leaders' and 'managers': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders and managers model my organisation's values and follow the code of conduct This example is good as it just asks about senior leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders model my organisation's values
A custom question should not significantly overlap with a question already in the survey	Don't ask this question as it's already covered in the survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor professional conduct is not tolerated at my organisation This core survey question already asks about this area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My organisation does not tolerate improper conduct
A custom question should not ask about non-work related topics	For example, don't ask this as someone's 'personal life' is not work-related: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress in my personal life affects my attitude towards work
Use appropriate response options for format of question	Write your question as a statement to use the agreement scale. Ask 'How satisfied are you...' to use the satisfaction scale.
Keep it concise	For example, don't write: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workgroups and teams across my organisation willingly share information and knowledge with each other whenever needed When you can ask it like this instead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workgroups across my organisation willingly share information with each other
All employees must be able to answer the question	For example, the core survey question 'My manager provides me with enough support when I need it' has a 'don't know' response option for employees who have not needed support from their manager
Avoid the use of negative (especially double negative) phrasing in questions	For example, don't ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't often feel as if I don't belong at this organisation And instead ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel as if I belong at this organisation
Question wording should be as neutral as possible – avoid leading questions and questions that use loaded or emotive language	For example, don't ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good work is applauded and rewarded by excellent teammates And instead ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I receive meaningful recognition when I do good work

Writing a custom demographic question

The custom demographic question should ask about a unique aspect of working at your organisation which is not covered by the standard question set. For example, the site or campus an employee works at.

A custom demographic question should not ask about personal characteristics.

When writing your question, keep in mind the reporting you wish to receive and the actions it will allow you to take.

If you had a custom demographic question in last year, review the results and consider:

- Did this question give my organisation the information we needed?
- Does my organisation need information on a different topic or to change the focus of the custom question?

Response options for a custom demographic question

Include response options for everyone, while keeping the following in mind:

- All employees need to be able to answer your custom demographic question. The question cannot be skipped.
- Include an option for employees who work across multiple sites or remotely, if required.
- Each response option will only receive reporting if there are 10 or more survey responses.
- Group together response options with small numbers of staff so they have the best chance of meeting the reporting threshold. For example, 'Other rural office'.