

Survey FAQs

1) *What are these new questions about?* The questions regarding age and racial/ethnic identity are part of BYM's new Growing Diverse Leadership Initiative. The GDL initiative is designed to strengthen our faith and communities by increasing the participation of and quality of experience for young adults and people of color in our local and yearly meetings.

2) *How do we know how people identify or how old they are?*

If you don't already know how people in the community identify or their ages, there are a number of thoughtful ways to find that out. You could conduct a survey in which you could ask this information along with other things that you would find useful to know for your own programming such as evaluations of events or ideas for the meeting. This is common in many places of worship and can be another way to get input from regular attenders and connect to and bring in new attenders.

You can add these questions to any place where you are already gathering information. For instance, do you have a way of gathering contact information? Are there places where people RSVP or register for other activities or events where you are collecting information?

It can be included in your membership process. As people become members they share of course share lots about themselves in a thorough and thoughtful process that could include this demographic information as well.

As meetings work on collecting this information there will be opportunities to share experiences, ideas, and best practices on how to do it effectively.

3) *Why are we looking at age and race specifically? What about other forms of diversity?* Our commitment to honoring the Light in everyone calls us to invite diversity and equity with regard to many social identities in addition to racial/ethnic identity and age (such as sexual orientation, gender, class, region, ability, to name but a few). None of these is more important than another and BYM will continue to support and encourage all ongoing efforts with regard to each of them. However, some areas of equity have proven more challenging than others and when diversity efforts remain broad, it can be hard to make inroads on these particularly sticky ones. We believe these will require the additional focused attention of this new initiative.

While Quakers have taken an interest in racial equity since our early years in this country, the Religion Society of Friends in the United States remains overwhelmingly White. This indicates that if we are hoping to move forward more on racial diversity in the next couple decades than we have in the last couple centuries, we will need to put concentrated effort in that direction. Age also presents a unique challenge. Many have noticed that the median age of Quakers in the US has increased steadily over the last few decades, and many local and yearly meetings have declined in numbers. As we look to the future, focusing on growing & embracing young adult leadership in a country where that population is increasingly diverse helps us sustain both our values and our faith community.

Furthermore, genuine inclusion and equity work is never zero-sum. Young people and people of color come from all different backgrounds with regard to sexual orientation, gender, class, region, ability, etc. and there will be many opportunities for overlap and collaboration on these issues. As we strengthen and stretch our understanding around any form of inclusion, we become ever more adept at applying learning to many forms of inclusion.

4) Does the race question pertain to everyone or just the young adults?

The race/ethnicity question pertains to everyone.

5) What is the significance of the age categories used? The youth ages give us information relevant to youth programs by matching up with categories for our camps and youth conferences. The adult age categories are selected for two reasons. 1) Different organizations and programs have different definitions of the term “young adult”. Some define it as under 25, others as under 30, under 35 and many Quakers use under 40. As we partner with other organizations and funders, it is useful for us to know how many members fit in these categories. 2) These categories match up roughly with certain life-stages, such as college/post high school years, years where many are working independently, years where many are starting new families, retiring etc. This gives us a rough outline of some programming that might be helpful without adding a new set of more specific questions.

6) Why do we need this level of specificity with regard to race/ethnicity? There are two things to consider here. One is practical and one is principal. On a practical level, knowing specific information about who is a part of our community helps us think about how to better serve the people here and also about the particular communities to which there has or has not been success in connecting. Beyond that, as we try to build diverse communities, we do so in acknowledgement that many people (and particularly people of color) have been labeled against their will. While categorizing will always lead to some limitation, allowing space for people to define themselves as fully as possible in this area is an important stand against this kind of oppression.

7) Why is this information necessary? How will it be used? Without this information, it would be nearly impossible to have a true sense of where we are with regard to participation of young adults and people of color in our meetings or to track progress as we proceed. As we start creating ways to increase the participation and quality of experience of young adults and people of color, this information is one—but not the only—way we will establish a baseline and start keeping track of which actions have the biggest impact. Without our national census information, social-scientists would not be able to illustrate inequality, replicate positive trends, or tailor policy. In much the same way, we cannot fully grow and develop the BYM community without being able to see it fully. Furthermore, the process of putting our attention on these areas can be a useful social and spiritual practice in and of itself. (See question 6).

8) Won't this be difficult?

We understand that this will take effort. We want to work together to make it work. We know that any additional information we try to collect as a community involves additional effort, especially in the beginning. Just like when we added information about youth, this new information will take some figuring out. No one expects the information collected to be perfect off the bat. Simply do the best you

can. This project, just like our commitment to living our value of equality, is a long-term effort and each year it will be a little easier. As local meetings work on this, we are excited to have opportunities for all of us to share experiences, best practices, and creative ideas in this regard. This addition to the survey--like our overall commitment to living our value of equality--is a long-term effort and we hope each year it will become a little more integrated and seamless.

The process of putting our attention on these areas can be a useful social and spiritual practice in and of itself. Quakers have long understood that there can be value in putting conscious attention on a topic and allowing ourselves to sit with and wrestle with it. The process of collecting and figuring out how to collect this information on race and age gives us the opportunity to put our attention on these issues. This could be an opportunity to learn new things about members of our meeting or to correct assumptions we may have held. It could become an entry into being more aware of the make-up of the communities we inhabit (an act of solidarity with people in racial or age minorities who are often acutely aware of these dynamics). It could be used as way to warm up to deeper conversations about inclusion.

The behind the scenes work of equity building within our communities is important social justice work. Though it can feel unglamorous, this work of getting a clear picture our community's make-up is vital to the work of living into equity. To illustrate, many members of BYM have recently taken important stands on police violence by carrying Black Lives Matter banners at rallies or displaying them in front of their meetings. However, we would not even be able to discuss or bring attention to disproportionate use of force against Black people if someone hadn't decided it mattered and was worth the effort to record the race of victims. Whether looking at health outcomes, education, effects of global warming etc, almost every group working for change in the world relies on such statistics to help them discern and communicate a way forward. And what better way to have integrity in that process then to turn that lens inward to our own communities. So when filling out forms or collecting papers or crunching numbers feels tedious, remember this work you are engaged in behind the scenes is every bit as much a part of change as any banner we could fly.