

Asking about “Relationships”

The survey asks questions about relationships and marital status: We want to know if parents and children are either biological, step, or adopted, and we wanted to know if partners are “living together in a marriage-like relationship but not married” or are “unmarried partners.”

In many customs, it is culturally undesirable to be living with someone before marriage or “step” or “adopted” relationships rarely occur. These cultural differences can make asking about these relationships seem offensive. Simply explain that the survey does not want to miss anyone and in order to maintain research consistency, we have to ask these questions of everyone.

Certain terms are very specific to the American experience, and the translations might not “make sense” for everyone. Although we have taken measures to ensure that this rarely happens, there are two reasons why this might occur:

- 1) Respondents might not understand a term because it is a concept that only exists in English and not their native language.
- 2) Respondent is not familiar with the concept in any language.

Sometimes, the respondents still do not understand it because they do not have knowledge of, or experience with it. You can probe to determine when a respondent’s response is a legitimate “Don’t Know”.