# Veracio Tutorial 2:
# Choosing Geography and Weighting Questions

Welcome to Veracio — an online tool that will help you create surveys and accurately interpret your results by using weights to summarize survey responses.

There are three basic stages to using Veracio:

1. Create a Survey
2. Collect Responses
3. Analyze Results

In this tutorial, we'll look at two parts of the first stage in more detail: **choosing geography and adding weighting questions.**

## How Veracio Works

When creating a survey with Veracio, you are asked to select a geography and weighting question(s).  This is probably a little different than most other online survey tools you've used — Veracio needs this information from you and your survey respondents to help you get the most out of your data.

What sets Veracio apart from other survey tools is that it takes your survey responses and analyzes them using a specific technique called weighting to make them more representative of a population. Veracio uses US Census data to determine how representative individual respondents are of the community you're studying. To do this, it needs to know the geographical location of your respondents, as well as some of their characteristics:

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Ethnicity

*Example:*

If your community of interest is 50% men and 50% women but your survey respondents are 20% men and 80% women, the results of your survey will not accurately represent the opinions of your community.

Veracio adjusts your results to account for the fact that more women than men answered your survey, making your results a more accurate reflection of the community.  In this example, responses from men would get additional weight and responses from women would have their weight reduced.

To make these adjustments, Veracio needs to:

- Know how many men and women from the community answered your survey
- Compare it to how many men and women live in the community you're studying

Veracio gets the information about how many men and women live in your community by accessing US Census data about your **geography** of interest.  Veracio gets the information about how many men and women answered your survey through the **weighting questions** you include.

# Choosing Geography

When creating your survey, you are asked to specify the geography of the community of respondents you are trying to understand with your survey.  This geography can be the entire USA, one or more states, or one or more counties.

*Examples:*

- If your survey is designed to capture the mood of the population of the US, you should select the entire **country** as your geography.
- If you are interested in the opinions of people who live in a state debating whether or not to pass legislation to upgrade the bridges in that state, you should select that **state** as your geography.
- If your survey is designed to gather opinions from parents within a specific school district, you should choose the **county or counties** that are included in that school district.

It's best to choose the **smallest geographical area** you are interested in —this will improve the likelihood your results are accurate.

*Examples:*

- If you are interested in two counties within a state – choose those two counties, don't choose the entire state.
- If you are interested in ten major US states, choose those states rather than the entire country.

Veracio will use census data from the population of the geography you select.  It will take the responses your survey receives and weight them to make them representative of the entire geographic community of interest.

Want more details on exactly how Veracio does this? Check out our tutorial on the technical details of what weighting does.

## Choosing Weighting Questions

After you've chosen your geographic location(s) of interest, you'll need to choose some weighting questions to include in your survey.  **You can include from one to three weighting questions.**  (Due to the way the US Census data is made available, you cannot use both age and education in the same survey.)

Weighting questions are the respondents' characteristics you want to use to adjust the small selection of people within your community who answer your survey to be more like the entire community of interest.

(The weighting questions available in the initial version of Veracio are demographics (sex, age, education, ethnicity), but in the future, weighting questions will be able to include behavioral or other characteristics as well.)

It's best to choose weighting questions that separate groups you think might answer your survey differently.

*Examples:*

- If you are asking a question that men and women are likely to answer very differently, add the sex weighting question.
- If you are asking a survey question that you think might be strongly influenced by a person's age, add the age weighting question.

It is important to keep in mind that adding weighting questions **will add to the total time** it takes your respondents to complete the survey, since they are required to answer all weighting questions for successful completion. Some respondents may find too many weighting questions intrusive or cumbersome, so choose your questions carefully.

You have a total of four choices in weighting questions:

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Education

4. Ethnicity

These questions are taken directly from the US Census and potential response categories also use the exact wording of the US Census, to ensure data consistency.

The wording for the four weighting questions is shown below. Weighting questions cannot be customized, but you may add a description (optional) to clarify why you are asking the question.

# What is your age?

Question:

What is your age?

Description:

Enter the question description

## Choices

Under 18 years

18 to 24 years

25 to 44 years

45 to 64 years

65 years and over

# What is your sex?

Question:

What is your sex?

Description:

Enter the question description

## Choices

Male

Female

# What is your education?

Question:

What is your education?

Description:

Enter the question description

# Choices

Less than high school diploma

High school graduate (includes equivalency)

Some college or associate's degree

Bachelor's degree or higher

## What is your ethnicity?

Question:

> What is your ethnicity?|

Description:

> Enter the question description

## Choices

WHITE ALONE, NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO

HISPANIC OR LATINO

BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN ALONE

ASIAN ALONE

OTHER

# Congratulations!

You should now have a basic understanding of how to choose geography and weighting questions for your survey, and a better understanding of why Veracio requires you to include them.

If you still have questions about Veracio's weighting process or how to use it, we're always here to help. Reach out to our support team via email or on Twitter.