

Collecting Ethnic Group Information

Many food banks have expressed a desire to understand more about who they are helping, and how this compares to the population of their area.

We know that food insecurity is more prevalent amongst people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds than amongst people who would describe their ethnicity as white (for more information, [please read this report by Runnymede Trust](#)). In addition, we know that poverty rates are experienced differently by people from different minority ethnic backgrounds.

Collecting ethnic group information will enable food banks and the Trussell Trust to have a richer picture of who is coming to a food bank for support, how this compares to the population of your area, and provide evidence to influence local and national policy and help food banks to tailor provision to suit local communities.

What ethnic groups can be selected on the e-voucher?

White	English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish Irish Gypsy or Irish Traveller Roma Other
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	White and Black Caribbean White and Black African White and Asian Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background
Asian or Asian British	Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese Any other Asian background

Black or Black British	African Caribbean Any other Black background
Other ethnic group	Arab Any other ethnic group
No answer	Prefer not to say Not asked

We have ensured that the data that we collect on ethnicity is **comparable with data from the Census** and is suitable to be used across the United Kingdom. There may be situations where somebody does not feel their ethnicity is represented on the voucher, that they may not be comfortable to answer the question, or that you may not be able to ask the question. In these scenarios, either ‘prefer not to say’ or ‘not asked’ should be selected.

What happens the next time someone is issued a voucher?

If the person has previously provided their ethnic group, the referrer will not be prompted to ask the question again and will not see what was previously selected. If they are no longer comfortable with this information being recorded, they can choose to permanently remove any association with their ethnic group information from the system.

What if someone no longer wants to provide their ethnic group information?

A person’s ethnic group information will only be collected once, so if they need another voucher, the display will say **“In the past, the individual provided their ethnic group, therefore we are not asking for this information.”** The referrer will also have the option to permanently remove any association with their ethnic group information from the system.

Once it has been removed, the next time a voucher issued the ethnic group section will say **“This person has opted not to give their ethnic group**

information. However, if they have changed their mind, you can add ethnic group information.”

What access do food banks, referral agencies and the Trussell Trust have to people’s ethnic group information?

Once a voucher has been issued, there is no way for food banks, referral agencies or the Trussell Trust to see the ethnicity of an individual. The data will be available to food banks in aggregated reports, with the first report available from October 2023, in line with the release of mid-year stats.

A report available to food banks and the Trussell Trust will show total vouchers fulfilled for each ethnic group ethnicity by food bank centre and referral agency each quarter. The data will have a **minimum aggregation level of five**, which means if there are fewer than five people in a certain ethnic group, the data will not be shown so individuals cannot be identified. After this, ethnicity reports will be updated each quarter.

What do I do if someone complains about collecting ethnicity?

The decision to provide ethnicity data is entirely optional. Collecting ethnic group information will enable food banks and the Trussell Trust to have a richer picture of who is coming to a food bank for support, how this compares to the population of their area, and provide evidence to influence local and national policy and help food banks to tailor provision to suit local communities. This information may also be used to help food banks better meet the needs of particular ethnic and cultural groups in local communities. For example, identifying if a particular group is either over or underrepresented at the food bank compared to the local population, or providing more culturally appropriate food parcels.

Working with the system developers, the Trussell Trust has developed a process that ensures Ethnicity information is not visible in a client record. Once a voucher is fulfilled, the Ethnicity data is stored in a separate

encrypted data table. Reports which display ethnicity data are anonymised so that it cannot be used to identify an individual.

If someone chooses to provide their ethnicity, but later changes their mind, they can withdraw their consent and we will stop using ethnicity data linked to them. If they are issued with a new voucher, the referrer will be able to see that they have previously declined to provide this information and they will not be prompted to ask the question.

Guide to collecting ethnic group information

Before the question is asked, it is important to make clear that the information will only be used for reporting purposes and their ethnic group will not be linked to them as an individual. An individual should never be pressured into providing this information, and it should be made clear they can choose for their ethnic group not to be recorded by selecting **“Prefer not to say”**.

Key principles to keep in mind:

- The reason for collecting the information should be made clear
- It should be made clear that the data will be anonymised and will not be sold on
- It should be made clear that the question is optional
- It should be asked in a nice tone

You may wish to read aloud the help copy which will appear with the question:

“The ethnicity entered here is not visible to the food bank or the Trussell Trust after the voucher has been issued, and individuals are not identified in any reports. Collecting this data enables the food bank to look at trends and create reports on the ethnicity of people referred to them in relation to the local area.”

We would recommend that the question is asked in this way:

“Based on the following categories, how would you describe your ethnicity?”

Then read the top-level categories, including prefer not to say:

- *“White*
- *Mixed or multiple ethnic groups*
- *Asian*
- *Black*
- *Other ethnic group*
- *Prefer not to say”*

Depending upon the response, read through the subcategories. For example:

*Q: “Based on the following categories, how would you describe your ethnicity?”
[read top level categories and ‘Prefer not to say’*

A: Black

Q: Okay, and from the following categories: ‘African’, ‘Caribbean’, ‘Any other Black background’

If the person does not feel that their ethnicity is captured in the categories, then the referrer should select **“Any other ethnic group”** under **Other ethnic group** rather than the referrer choosing on their behalf.

It is very important that all top-level categories and ‘Prefer not to say’ are read out to the person, even if they have pre-emptively given an answer. This is to make sure that they are aware of the full range of categories and that there is a ‘prefer not to say’ option.

This information will only be collected once, so for future referrals, a pop up will appear saying **“In the past, the individual provided their ethnic group, therefore we are not asking for this information”**.

If they decide that they would like their ethnicity removed from reports, then there is the option for this, as well as re-entering the ethnic group (but without seeing the previous response).