

# So You Want To Run A Community Survey

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Setting up a community survey can seem like a daunting task. You may not know where to start, but this article is meant to help break down creating a survey into smaller and easier to understand parts.

## Setting Up The Description: Things Your Participants Need to Know

The description of your survey is the first thing that potential participants of your survey will see. It needs some key features to give important, necessary information. Ideally, a survey's description should have:

- 1) WHO is conducting the survey.
- 2) WHAT the information in the survey is going to be used for.
- 3) WHAT kind of questions are being asked.
- 4) WHAT user data is collected.
- 5) HOW this data will be protected.
- 6) HOW the user can opt out.

Generally, the survey description should include these details so that people who are looking to take it have a complete understanding of what they are going to participate in. This is for ethical reasons. It's important that participants fully understand what the survey entails, how the information will be used, what (if any) security risks could come from their participation, who is managing their data and created the survey, and how they can withdraw from participating. Transparency in surveys is of the greatest importance. People need to know what will be in a survey before they can agree to fill out and give away their information.

### The "WHO"

For transparency, it's important to have an identifier of some kind attached to the survey in order for participants to be fully aware of who will be handling the information they submit and using it at a later date. Some potential participants may not want to work with certain survey creators, and that's their right to choose as active, informed individuals. On the opposite side, some potential participants may find that they trust certain individuals to handle specific survey topics more than they would others, and will find that as a reassuring factor when partaking in the survey.

### The "WHAT"s

Participants need to know what you will use the survey data in and how you will publish it. Will you use the survey data for research purposes and summarize it? Will you publish the raw, unaltered spreadsheets on your personal website? Will you not publish the data at all? You don't need to be extremely detailed and pedantic about what you plan to do with the data. Give participants a general idea of what you have in mind for it. Participants need to have at least a basic understanding of what to expect to be done with the data they're providing.

When you give a brief outline of what kinds of questions you will ask, this also helps participants decide if they will be comfortable engaging with the survey. Some surveys may touch on topics that potential participants do not want to take part in, and that is okay. The reverse is also true, where some topics may be of particular interest to potential participants and encourage them to take the survey. If it helps, you can also reframe this as “WHAT is the goal of this survey?” Giving more in-depth answers as to what you hope to learn from creating this survey serves a similar purpose.

## The “HOW”s

User data can be a complicated, sensitive subject. When gathering survey data, you need to explicitly say if you are or are not gathering any identifiable data such as legal names, addresses, and birthdates. If you *are* gathering such information, why do you need it? How will this information be made unidentifiable, and what is the likelihood that it could be made re-identifiable? To what extent will you share this information? How long will you keep the information? How will you and your software protect this information? What security measures are in place to protect participant confidentiality? Most importantly, what risk do participants run if your security measures fail and their information is exposed?

Because of the extent of security that would be needed when handling such sensitive information, it is generally recommended that you do **not** gather private, identifying data in your surveys. In cases where you are not actively gathering identifiable private data in your survey, make it clear that the survey is anonymous. Make sure to also mention whether your survey software gathers any information automatically, such as email addresses or I.P. addresses.

It is important that you leave an option for anyone to withdraw their submission before the survey closes. In cases where surveys are anonymous, the participant will have to inform you, the survey manager, of something unique about their submission that will allow you to locate and delete it. Let them know that this will be the case, so that they can make an informed decision about what they are most comfortable with.

There are also more optional aspects you can include in your description. For example, commonly asked questions and answers, survey manager credentials, links to relevant social media platforms related to the survey, and anything else you feel is necessary.

## Remember Plural Systems!

One of the unique issues to think about for alterhuman surveys is how plural systems will interact with the survey. This will depend largely on the survey’s intended goal or audience, and the survey program itself. If plurality is beyond the scope of your survey or the capabilities of your survey program, the standard rule is to accept one survey response per physical body.

In your description and/or advertisements for surveys aimed at alterhumans, it is a good idea to outline how plurals should interact with the survey: either one response per body, or one

response per individual in-system who wants to participate. If there are questions that will be challenging or ambiguous for plural systems to answer together, you can also give advice on how the system should approach the questions. For example, in write-ins throughout the survey, each individual could use a consistent identifier to mark before they type and to differentiate them from others in their system. In cases where you're unsure of what issues there may be in your survey for plural participants, ask some plural systems about any problems they see and what solutions they think would be best, or run an informal poll of plural systems to get some quick guidance before finalizing your actual survey.

If a survey asks for pronoun preference, how a plural system answers is up to their own choice. For example, they could choose the pronouns that they would be happy for other people to use for their body as a whole. If only part of the system is a member of the survey's target group, the system could choose pronouns that suit that part of the system.

Some plural systems have complicated feelings about their age, so they may wonder how the age limits apply to them. If a survey has a minimum age requirement of 18, then every participant in a survey needs to physically be at least 18 years old. This is for ethical reasons and is regardless of the inner age of system members.

## Actually Writing the Survey

Surveys, like essays, require multiple drafts. Don't be afraid to take your time in tinkering with question wording, order, and figuring out what you need or don't need in the survey. Don't expect to get it perfect on your first go-through.

When coming up with questions, it's recommended that you keep the goal in mind at all times. What do you want to discover? What are you interested in learning about, and what do you need to ask in order to understand it? Try to avoid asking questions that aren't relevant to your survey's intended purpose. Breaking your survey down into multiple sections can also be helpful to further narrow down your focus.

### Keeping Questions Neutral

When writing out your questions and answers, it's important to keep the wording neutral. Don't write them in a way which leads your participants towards specific answers! There are many types of issues that can arise when writing questions and answers, and sometimes it can be hard to catch them. Here are some explanations and examples below.

**Loaded questions.** A loaded question is a question in which the respondent cannot answer without simultaneously agreeing to something which may or may not be untrue. Also referred to as "trick questions" and "lose-lose questions." For example, "Have you stopped biting people?" is a question where if the respondent answers "yes" then they're still saying that they used to bite people, and if they answer "no" then they're saying they both previously and are currently biting people.

**Double-barreled questions.** A double-barreled question, also called a “double direct question” or a “compound question,” is a question that includes more than one topic per question but only allows for a single answer (most often yes or no). For example, “Do you think that our brand of microphones are sturdy and record well?” is an example of a question that is asking about both sturdiness and recording capabilities. But since only one answer is allowed, it makes the participant unable to differentiate between the two in cases where they agree with one statement but not the other.

**Leading questions.** An assumption-based leading question is a question where there is a preconceived assumption that is being made within the question. For example, “How satisfied are you with the Goncharov movie?” is a question which makes the assumption that the viewer enjoyed the movie without ever bothering to actually ask them if they were. You’ll often find these types of questions in product surveys and company surveys.

A leading question with interconnected statements is a question where a statement is said before the question, intending to place a certain bias on the answerer. For example, “Most people think that voice calls are worse than texts. Do you agree?” is a question which puts pressure on the answerer and attempts to persuade them to agree with the mentioned majority.

A direct leading question is a question which relies on *if* statements, relying on implications and theoreticals to get the desired response. For example, “If you found this convention fun, would you return next year?” is a question which asks respondents to consider their reactions to something positive that they may or may not actually agree with (the convention being fun).

A coercive leading question is a question which relies on posing a statement and then an immediate question which would typically be responded to with an affirmative. For example, “You hate the color red, don’t you?” words the question in an aggressive, affirmation-seeking way. It is implying that there is a clear “right” answer and a “wrong” answer.

A scale-based leading question is a question which relies on unbalanced scale answers. For example, an answering scale of “Extremely satisfied,” “Very satisfied,” “Somewhat satisfied,” “Dissatisfied,” places 3 of the 4 answers in the question topic’s favor, and only one against.

Other forms of leading question can include questions which have subtle insinuations, by using terms with specific negative connotations. Some leading questions may include too many variables, putting emphasis on a question where none exists. Still others may rely on unhelpful answering categories that inherently restrict possible participant answers, or which skew the answers’ relevancy by virtue of the question’s underlying design.

**Negatives.** Avoid double negatives when writing your survey questions (and answers). Double negatives can easily confuse survey readers, especially if English isn’t their first language. In Spanish and some other languages, as well as in some English dialects, double negatives mean the opposite of what they do in standard English. A single negative in a

sentence can be confusing and add too much complexity, too. You've probably heard some questions that use negatives in such a way that you're not sure exactly what it would mean if you answered "yes" or "no" to them. Whenever possible, rephrase your sentences in the positive. Use clear and concise language.

## Forms of Question

There are different ways you can design your questions to make them easier to understand and better for what you are trying to ask. Questions for surveys typically come in three standard designs:

**Multiple choice questions.** Likely the type of question you are most familiar with, multiple choice questions allow for the participant to pick from two or more pre-written choices. These are good for yes/no questions and for categorization questions, where you're asking the participant to pick one or more relevant answers. Multiple choice questions are often the easiest to do data analysis on. It's recommended that you don't include write-in options for most forms of multiple choice questions. If participants write answers that you had already offered in a list, then you will have to do the work by hand to figure out the statistics of the question. That takes a lot of time. If you can't avoid it, simply put an "Other" category and an optional write-in below the multiple choice.

When writing multiple choice questions, be aware that "yes" and "no" questions are handled differently in other languages and cultures. If you ask any yes or no questions, make sure the answer is not just the sentence "Yes," but a sentence that clarifies what it's saying yes to, such as "Yes, I am." Various languages, dialects, and cultures also have differences in how they interpret negative sentences and double negatives. As much as possible, you should phrase your questions in the positive.

**Write-in questions.** Another extremely familiar form of question to many, write-in questions can come in long-form or short-form. These questions are useful when asking for clarifications or details about immediately previous multiple choice questions, and for when asking about complex topics that couldn't otherwise be put into a multiple choice or scaled question. These questions are extremely valuable for gathering information that might be otherwise missed in other forms of questions, but take a lot of time and effort to process. Participants can also sometimes be put off by a survey with too many mandatory write-in questions. These questions can help make it easier to separate legitimate participants from trolls or people intending to cause mischief, because they will respond with answers that don't make sense.

**Scaled questions.** A question that relies on multiple choices to form a linear sliding scale, covering a specific range, such as of time/frequency or emotion. There is no write-in option available for scaled questions, typically, because they are often measuring something specific in a predefined set of options. Scales that have between 5 and 10 options are typically the easiest to do data analysis on.

## Organizing Your Questions

The order you write your questions is important! Surveys, like essays, should be easy-to-follow so as not to discourage the individuals participating in them. Poorly thought out arrangements of questions can result in discouraged participants abandoning the survey partway through, or can even have unintended effects on your data.

**Group together similar topics and similarly formatted questions topics.** For example, when asking about something such as age, gender, or nationality, it is a good idea to place these topics together in a “demographics” section rather than spreading them out randomly throughout the survey. Otherwise it can become jarring to your participant, and can cause them to become unfocused and disinterested or frustrated. This organization also makes it easier to parse through your data later, after the survey is complete.

**Put the best in the middle and save the worst for last.** The middle of your survey is the time period when participants are most likely to leave, so put your most interesting or provoking questions here! Similarly, save your most tedious or frustrating questions for the end of your survey. Due to sunk cost fallacy, most participants will not abandon a survey once they have completed a majority of it.

**Order effect.** The order that questions are asked in can affect how people answer them, a phenomena called order effect. For example, if question A is answered by most participants in a very different way depending on if it's asked before or after question B, then that would be an order effect. Order effects occur when a question elicits a largely negative or positive response, and then elicits a response in either a similar manner or a contrasting manner to the next question. This can be framed in simpler terms as one question setting the participants up to view the next question in a specific light, or with a specific emotional framework or background in mind. For example, a question which asks about a known hate group and then has a question afterwards about opinions on free speech is likely to see an increased amount of negative responses on the second question. Inversely, a question which asks about peaceful protests and then has a question afterwards about opinions on free speech will see an increased amount of positive responses on the second question. Keep these factors in mind when creating your survey.

## Gaining Consent

Participants must give their consent if you plan on publishing the information in the survey anywhere formal. It is good practice to include a question at the very beginning about gaining your participant's consent. You can also use this question to double-check that they understand what participation of the survey entails. See an example of a question/answer to gain participant consent taken from “The Otherhearted Community Survey” below:

**“Please check this box to confirm that you understand the terms of participation of this survey and to provide consent.**

Yes, I understand that I can back out of the survey at any time before the end and my answers will not be counted, and I understand that if I complete and submit the survey my anonymous responses may be made publicly viewable and used for research purposes.”

If you include an option for “I do not consent,” then all responses which choose this option should be discarded. If you have plans to attempt to formally publish the survey data in a book or journal, then, when gaining participants’ consents, you also *have* to make sure that participants are physically 18 or older. The only exception is if you are able and willing to reach out and gain guardian permission from minors who want to be involved in the survey, which is generally not recommended nor possible for online surveys. Minors are not able to legally give consent to be a part of research studies, surveys included.

You can manage participant ages by having a relevant age question in the demographics section of your survey. If a participant states that they are under 18, you can easily identify that they are a minor and discard their responses this way. If you are not gathering any demographic data, you can also include a question at the beginning of the survey simply asking if the participant is physically 18 or older.

It is also a good idea to include a question at the start of the survey which confirms that the participant is a part of the target group, if you have one. Sometimes people don’t read through advertisements and descriptions of surveys, and take surveys without realizing that they aren’t part of the group that the survey is aimed at. You can handle this potential issue in the same way as you gained participant consent, where you have them check a box to confirm.

## Question Writing Tips: Things to Keep in Mind

There are many opinions about when and if surveys should include neutral options, such as “I don’t know,” “I’m not sure,” and “maybe.” This also applies to opinion scaled questions having a central, neutral option, such as on scales of 5 or 7. It’s generally a poor choice to allow for “fence-sitting.” Offering consistent middle-of-the-road options reduces the accuracy of the data and allows for participants to pick and choose what they want to respond to in a survey among the mandatory questions. It can also be abused in published models, where a disingenuous reader can easily combine the “slightly agree,” “unsure,” or “maybe” category into their preferred category through clever wording to misrepresent the results.

For this reason, do not offer neutral options on all of your questions. Instead, you should generally only consistently offer neutral options on questions where you ask about topics that you did not clearly define previously in the survey for participants: this can include topics that are asking people about self-identified forms of categorization or about more nebulous topics, such as religion.

It can also be a good idea to offer the option to decline to answer some questions. This is not the same thing as fence-sitting. Allowing the participant to skip certain questions can be good for your data. If a participant is confronted by a required question that they really don’t

want to answer at all, they may feel tempted to lie or quit. “Decline to answer” allows them to be honest and keep going without muddying your data. If a portion of your survey has questions that are very personal or disturbing— for example, about their sex life or traumatic experiences— letting your participants choose not to answer those is an ethical way to respect their boundaries.

If you are worried that a multiple choice question is too constricting and a write-in question is too broad to work for what you are trying to ask, combine them: ask the multiple choice question with predefined answers, and then utilize the write-in question afterwards as an optional section where the participant can further explain their point of view.

Be aware that if you give examples in a question of potential answers, especially write-ins, you may create bias where more participants will choose what you gave in those examples.

Many people who write surveys make mistakes in asking about gender if it is not their area of knowledge. Phrasing these questions wrong can skew your data, make you look foolish, and insult your participants. You also don’t want to give yourself extra work by making these questions more complicated than necessary for your survey in an effort to include everybody. Think about whether it is relevant or necessary for your survey to ask about gender at all. If it is necessary, but you don’t want to derail the survey by asking a lot of extremely detailed questions about gender, keep your question simple by offering a small number of multiple choice questions. At its simplest, we recommend the options “boy or man,” “girl or woman,” and “nonbinary, agender, or other.” Alternatively, if all you really care to know is how to refer to your survey respondents in a sentence when you write about them, ask for their pronoun preference instead. At its simplest, we recommend the options “he,” “she,” “they,” and a write-in option. If you decide it is important for your survey to ask if participants are transgender, and the question has radio-button multiple choices that force a participant to choose only one option, do not put “transgender” as a separate option from “man” and “woman.” Instead, treat all genders fairly by differentiating them to the same degree: give the options “transgender woman,” “transgender man,” “cisgender or non-transgender woman,” “cisgender or non-transgender man,” “nonbinary, agender, or other.” If your survey has reason to go into a great deal of detail about gender identities, such as if it’s focused on discrimination or LGBTQ experiences, offer tick-boxes so that participants can choose as many options as apply to them. You can also have a write-in box for any gender identities that weren’t in your list.

## General Survey Writing Tips

Define all unusual words or specialized jargon within the survey if it is going to be mentioned in questions. If possible, avoid using such words at all, and say everything in plain English.

Even if you say that only a certain target audience should take your survey, some people from outside that audience will take your survey anyway. Make sure one or two of the questions in your survey asks participants whether they are members of that intended audience. For example, if you write a survey that you only intended for otherkin to take, one of the questions you should ask in the survey is “Are you otherkin?”

One problem with anonymous surveys on the Internet is that you can get a lot of responses from trolls. Your survey might get spread to a group of people who want to skew its results to support their own views. This is a big risk if your survey is about a controversial topic where opposite sides hope that the results of the survey will support their opinion. Troublemakers may try to flood it with fake information and nonsense to render it useless. You could even get responses from spam bots. It's a good idea to put some questions in your survey that you specially designed to help try to detect trolls and abusive responses. However, it's easy to design these wrong, so that you accidentally exclude legitimate responses, too. For example, if you ask about something that only people in your community can answer correctly, you'll accidentally exclude community members who just didn't happen to have heard or remembered that piece of obscure trivia. If you give them the opportunity to give a strange answer, you could rule out some legitimate respondents who just happen to have strange beliefs.

If you let participants write in one-word answers, remind them to write the actual word longhand, and to not censor themselves. If some participants use abbreviations or censor words, these inconsistencies will make it more difficult for you to total up how many participants wrote in the same word. It will also make it difficult for you to know what word they really meant.

Questions about where participants live might not be anonymous enough. This is especially tricky if only a small number of participants fill out the survey, or if there are only a couple of participants who live in a certain nation. Think about whether you really need to ask this question at all. If the survey is for participants all over the world, don't ask anything more specific than what nation they live in. Make sure you use an up-to-date list of nations for your dropdown list. Give the option to not answer the location question. Otherwise, participants who feel really uncomfortable with the question might quit filling out your survey, or might feel tempted to lie.

Ideally, proofread your survey so carefully before you launch it that it will be perfect and you will not have to make any changes to it later. If, during the time that your survey is running, you find a tiny, insignificant mistake in how you wrote your survey questions, it's okay to correct that mistake partway through, but ONLY if it's a tiny, insignificant mistake that doesn't change the meaning of your questions or your survey responses. For example, a spelling mistake in a word that didn't change the meaning of the word, so it was still unambiguous and easy to understand even when it had the typo. Try to avoid this situation by asking many people to look at your survey before you take it public.

If you find out that there's something seriously wrong with your survey during the time that it's already been running, such as questions that accidentally mean the opposite of what you intended, do NOT change the survey part way through and let it keep running. That would render all your survey results useless! It's also unethical, because it could make it look like participants answered questions that aren't what they were shown at all. That's not honest. If you find you made a significant mistake in a survey while it's in progress, the only right thing to do is to shut down the survey immediately, and start a new one with the mistakes fixed. Let

everybody know that if they took the survey, they need to retake it. This is why it's important to proofread your survey carefully before you launch it.

A good multiple-choice question to ask: where your participants heard about the survey. This can help show that your survey was distributed widely enough to be representative of the community, or if it only reached certain parts. If your survey results tend to skew in a certain direction, this can help explain why. List the places where you plan to distribute the survey, as well as some options for saying that they heard of the survey from a friend or somewhere else.

## Software

### Data Collection

There are various programs and online websites that you can use to create and manage a survey. They each have their pros and cons.

**Google Forms.** Google Forms is the most popular option for informal surveys due to its capability to export raw data automatically to Google Sheets and ease of use. It gives you the option to allow only one survey response per Gmail account, which limits the potential for mischief and allows for participants to go back and edit their survey data at a later point if they wish. Google Forms also has no upper limit to the amount of responses a survey can receive, or questions a survey can have.

**SmartSurvey.** A paid option, SmartSurvey has many security measures and is HIPAA compliant. It automatically collects participants' IP addresses, which you can use to filter by location, or identify malicious activity. Participants cannot edit their responses after they send them. The free version of SmartSurvey only offers up to 100 responses per month and 15 questions per survey. The paid version has a pay-monthly tier and allows unlimited responses. It offers more helpful options for processing check-box answers and write-in answers than are available in Google Forms. If you need to do an extremely complicated and detailed survey, SmartSurvey may be the best choice.

**Social media polls.** Simple polls built into social media platforms such as Twitter, Mastodon, and Dreamwidth are very limited in what they can do. You might not be able to export the raw data, or the privacy options might not meet your needs. However, these polls can be useful for quickly checking on your followers' opinions, or doing an interest check to see if there is a place for a more serious survey on a particular topic.

### Data Processing, Looking at your Raw Data, Creating Charts

When processing your data, choose a particular program from the beginning and stay with it. Opening the same spreadsheet file in different programs runs the risk that it might reconfigure and delete your rows and columns, or even corrupt your data entirely. There are various options for both free and paid data processing.

**Google Sheets.** Google sheets is a free alternative to Microsoft Excel. When using Google Forms to host and run your survey, it is possible to automatically export the data to Google Sheets. It may not be able to handle spreadsheets from more than 9,000 survey responses. However, nobody has ever gotten that many survey responses from the alterhuman communities. It has limited options for creating graphs and charts. You may need to use another program to generate graphs that look exactly the way you want.

**OpenOffice Calc.** An open-source alternative to Microsoft Excel. Free to download and use.

**Microsoft Excel.** This software is not free. See if your school or workplace offers a discount on it. It has many features that Google Sheets doesn't have. It can handle a higher number of participants. It has infinitely more options for what your charts and graphs look like. On the downside, if your spreadsheets are in Excel format, then they won't be accessible to most casual researchers and curious people who only have free options for spreadsheet software.

**RStudio.** Free and used professionally by data analysts. However, it requires knowledge of R in order to function and work with. If you don't already know the language, then it will likely be more trouble than it's worth. Free tutorials and documentation are available on-site, though.

## Publishing the Survey & Its Results

### Final Preparations

Before you start having participants take your survey for real, ask a small group of people to take a trial run of it. Let your testers know you can't keep their answers from the trial run, so they'll want to keep a copy of their answers to fill out the survey later for real. The testers should proofread your survey for mistakes in spelling and grammar. In particular, they should watch for anything that could change the meaning of your question, such as a "not" where it doesn't belong. You want your testers to tell you if there were questions that they couldn't understand, or if they were able to interpret your questions to mean something different than you intended. They can make a game of seeing how badly they can try to misinterpret your questions, as some participants might.

Bad data is worse than no data. Take the time to parse through everything multiple times with other sets of fresh eyes before you commit to publishing your survey for data collection. If you're not 100% confident about putting it out there, then take it back to the drawing board to rework it!

### Advertising the Survey

In advertising the survey, use a simple version of the description. Give the desired goal of the survey, who is running it, who the target audience is, when it will close, if the survey is

anonymous, and what you will use the data for. Attach the link. It's best to have a promotional image in the advertisement, too. The image helps people notice and fill out the survey. If you run more than one survey, use a noticeably different image for each survey. This helps people to recognize whether they've already taken that survey, or if it's a new one.

Sampling bias is a phenomenon in which a sample of data that is collected over-represents or under-represents specific groups. For example, a survey aimed at everyone with green eyes but which only advertises itself on Twitter will not be representative of everyone with green eyes, but instead just representative of specifically people on Twitter with green eyes.

Another problem is if your sample size is too small. Surveys work by looking at a small part of a group to give an idea of what is common for the whole group. However, if only a few people answer your survey, it's unlikely to be representative of the whole group. A sample size that's too small could just be a few friends with similar backgrounds who all agree with one another. That skews your data, instead of giving an idea of how diverse everybody is outside of that small group. How small of a sample size is too small depends on what you're surveying. For surveys about any alterhuman community, a survey that collected responses from fewer than 100 people is too small.

To avoid the problems of sampling bias and small sample sizes, try to advertise your survey to as wide an audience as possible. Don't stick to just a single website or group when you start spreading the survey. Make a long list of different websites and groups to post word of the survey. If you have relevant offline groups, spread word of the survey to them, too. The wider you spread your net, the larger the audience you'll get. The larger your sample size, the more reliable your data will be.

## Deleting Survey Entries

When you start to look through your survey data, you may notice that not all of the entries are from your target communities. Sometimes people may skim through your advertisements, survey description, and even the beginning survey questions without realizing that the survey isn't meant for them. Other times, people may fill out the survey with malicious intent, writing answers that don't make sense and filling out the survey in a way meant to skew your data.

It is impossible to fully avoid these types of responses. It is important that you are able to recognize when your responses are from people who don't understand what your survey is about, or aren't members of the groups that you're trying to gain information about. One way to do this is to keep your eyes out in question answers for anyone who picks especially bizarre answers. For example, someone who claims to be 100 years old, clicks every available option on multi-choice questions, and then writes silly one-word answers in the write-in questions is probably just a troll. You can also keep specific keywords or phrases in mind that you know are usually an indicator that the survey participant is not your target audience. For example, a survey aimed at transgender people might keep an eye out on responses which input "cisgender" or "not transgender" in the gender category, and then look into those specific entries to double-check that the respondent actually identifies as transgender.

You need to delete all the survey responses from people who clearly weren't supposed to take your survey. Don't feel bad about deleting them, even in cases where someone meant well in their entry but was clearly not a part of your intended audience. You're not making a moral judgment on that specific entry or the person who wrote it. You're just acknowledging that the entry isn't relevant, and then you are curating it appropriately. If you leave these inappropriate responses in, they can make your data inaccurate or unpublishable. It's your responsibility as a survey creator and manager to make sure that your data is as accurate as possible before you publish it.

## Anonymizing the Survey Data

Before you can publish your survey data, you must first make it anonymous. The process of anonymizing involves removing any identifying features from the survey data. This makes sure that all participants are entirely anonymous and cannot have their answers traced back to their person.

If someone has written in an Internet username or handle, or any private identifying information such as birth date, addresses, or legal names, it is appropriate to redact and delete that information. Anything which could identify someone online should be removed before you publish the raw data. If you collected geographical data such as country of origin, you might want to delete any location information that looks too identifying. For example, if there are fewer than ten responses from a particular nation. You could combine them into an "other" category instead.

Some alterhumans have very unusual and specific identities and experiences that make it too easy to recognize them from the community or find out exactly who they are. Keep this in mind when you anonymize the survey data. If you see some who seem instantly recognizable, think about creating a combined "other" category to put their extremely recognizable responses in before publishing the raw data, so as to redact it. Redacting identifying data in summarized publications is easier, because you can exclude specific identifying information in write-ins by simply not quoting anything that would out someone as having written a specific answer, or by quoting around the parts which would out them. For example, if someone says in a long-form answer, "I am a lion and a black-tipped reef shark therian who has been in the community for fifteen years, and I experience phantom whiskers," you could simply state in the summary that one therian respondent mentioned experiencing phantom whiskers.

## How & Where to Publish the Survey Data

When publishing the survey data, you can publish it in two ways: summarized, or raw. Summarized survey data includes charts and graphs that help to cohesively explain the statistics of the survey in useful models. Raw survey data is the anonymized spreadsheet (usually an .XLS or compatible file) filled with user data from which the charts and graphs in the summarized data are made.

Summarized data includes any relevant charts and graphs, but it must also include the percentages of each option on each question, and the number of participants which chose each option on each question. A simple screenshot or picture of a graph or chart with no additional text will not suffice. It is also important to remember accessibility with both color and design when creating graphs and charts for these summaries: make sure not to use colors that are too similar, colors that look the same for different kinds of colorblindness (such as red and green), or colors that are low-contrast and difficult to see for people with low vision (such as gray text on white). It is also a good choice to avoid any sort of color pairing where one has known negative associations and one has known positive associations, such as making a graph red and blue. Remember to put descriptive captions on your charts and graphs when possible.

It is recommended that you publish both sets of data. The summarized data allows for the survey results to be easily digestible and understandable by the layman, but further examinations of the raw data can be used by other researchers looking at it against their own statistics, or for information that was not in the original summarization. Both are invaluable in their own right.

Where you publish the data is up to personal preference, but it's highly recommended that you do it on a personal website, or on a cloud service that you control. Make sure that you keep it somewhere you can maintain and easily link to when sharing it elsewhere. You don't want the data to become lost or deleted without you realizing it.

## How to Understand Survey Results

"All models are wrong, but some are useful," is a quote that is attributed to George E. P. Box, a British statistician. When engaging with survey data, keep in mind that there are many ways data can be displayed, but only some will be useful to the person who is viewing the data. Data displayed simply will be better understood, but by displaying data in simple manners some information will be left out.

In this way, all models are also approximations. Even if you run a survey ten times under identical circumstances, you're likely to get variations. There is no one "perfect" or "correct" version of your data that you need to work to achieve. Strive to make your model as useful and applicable as you possibly can to what you're trying to demonstrate.

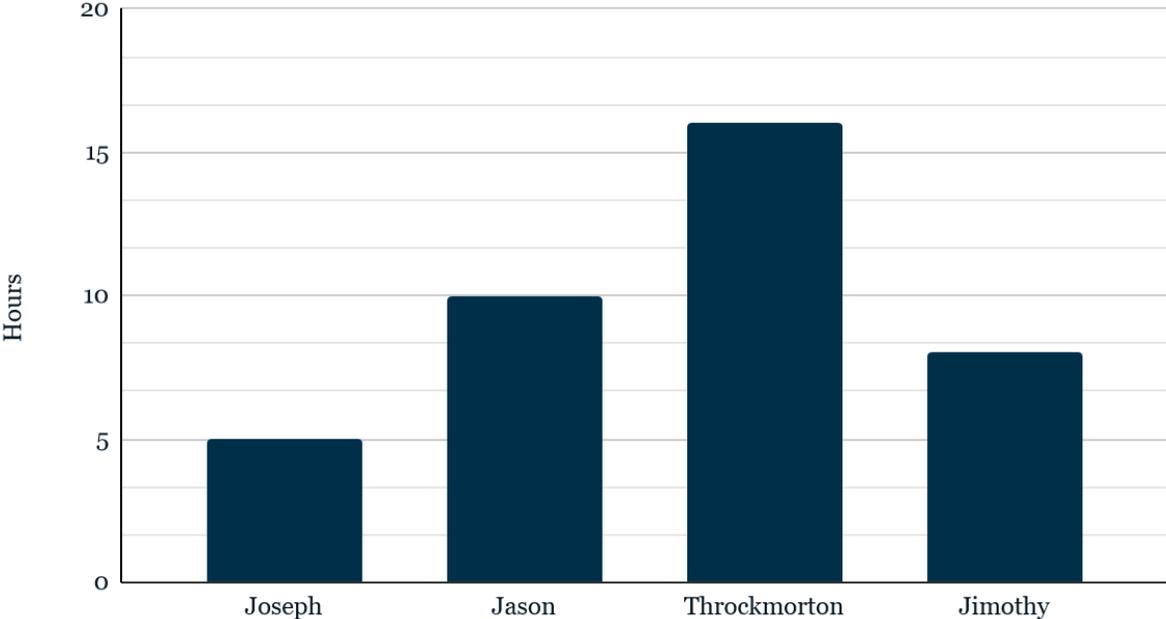
## Misleading Data Representations

Data presentation is malleable. It's extremely easy to mislead viewers and make the data say what you want it to say, as opposed to being wholly transparent and giving all related information gleaned in the process of the survey or project. Sometimes accidents can happen, and chunks of data can be entered incorrectly or missing entirely without the publisher's knowledge. These factors are a part of why it is so important for the raw data to be published

alongside the summarized data, because it makes it significantly easier to notice when someone is trying to falsify their data or has made a mistake. Here are some types of misleading data representations.

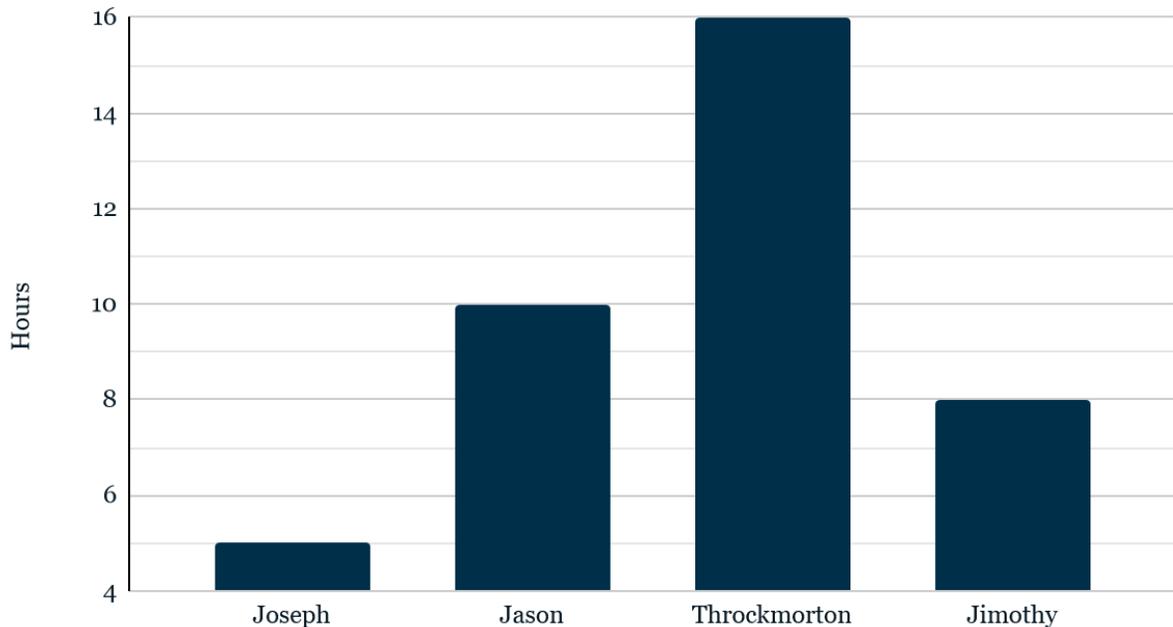
**Scale truncation.** This is a form of data visualization in which differences are heavily exaggerated between different displayed entries, most often done by use of sneakily cutting off part of the y-axis.

Amount of time spent working per day (hours)



Above is a standard bar chart depicting the hours worked by four different roommates each day. The Y-axis runs from 0 to 20, with major tick lines going in 5's. The bar chart below is of the same data, but it starts the Y-axis scale a 4 and utilizes major tick lines going by 2's. This minor edit makes it look as though Throckmorton does an incredible amount of work each and every day in comparison to the others, and as though Joseph barely works at all!

## Amount of time spent working per day (hours)

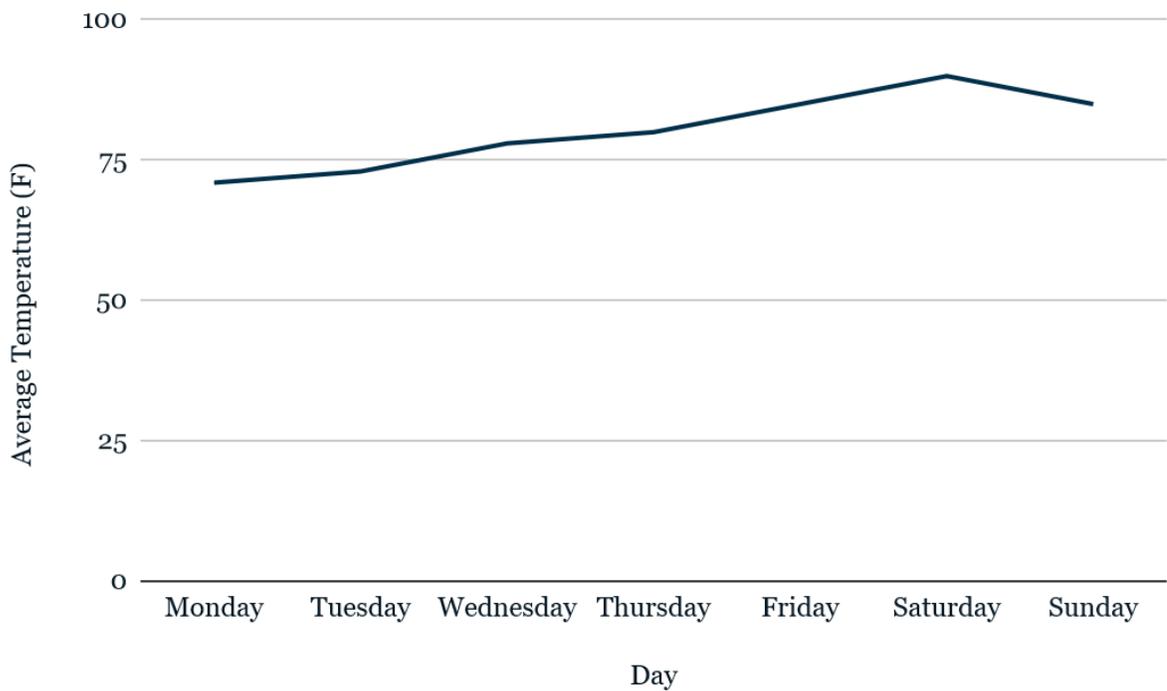


It's important to note that while cutting off parts of the vertical axis can easily be used to make graphs appear that they have bigger data differences than they actually do, it can also be a necessary tool in certain data sets. In other words, **it's okay not to start your Y-axis at zero, with the caveat that doing so serves an intentional, apparent purpose.** When the small numbers and differences are important, when you're trying to emphasize the differences to showcase a specific point, when having a Y-axis that starts at 0 makes your scale almost nonfunctional-- these are all valid reasons to not have your Y-axis start at zero.

However, when engaging in this practice, an effort should be made to vocalize or point out that the numbers are not starting at zero, either in the descriptive caption below the visual or in the content referring to it. Making a scale look more severe can be an important tool for emphasis, but the difference between a misleading scale and merely an intentionally exaggerated one is the effort for transparency which goes on alongside it.

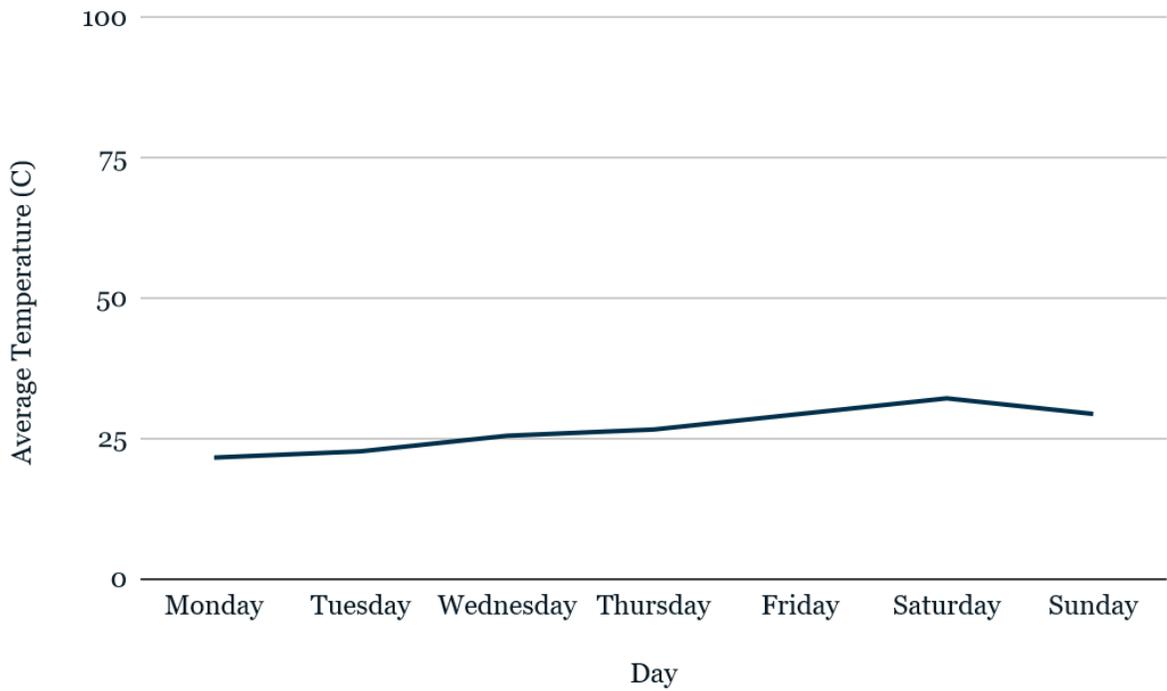
**Other forms of Y-axis manipulation.** Truncation isn't the only form of Y-axis manipulation. Depending on the measurements used, for example, charts can look very different.

## Average Temperature per Day



The line chart above illustrates changes in average temperature from day-to-day in Fahrenheit. The difference is easily noticeable and, if you're in the US, Fahrenheit is the standard temperature measurement that people would expect to see. The line chart below, comparatively, is in Celsius, but the vertical axis has not changed to similarly reflect the value difference. This makes it look, to the unassuming American viewer, that the temperatures are significantly colder than expected and experienced less fluctuation. This is a common strategy used by climate change deniers in order to warp representations of the data.

## Average Temperature per Day



**Correlation and causation.** Sometimes data that may at first seem related, isn't. With multiple sets of data, it can become very easy to imply that relationships and causations exist where there is, in fact, none.

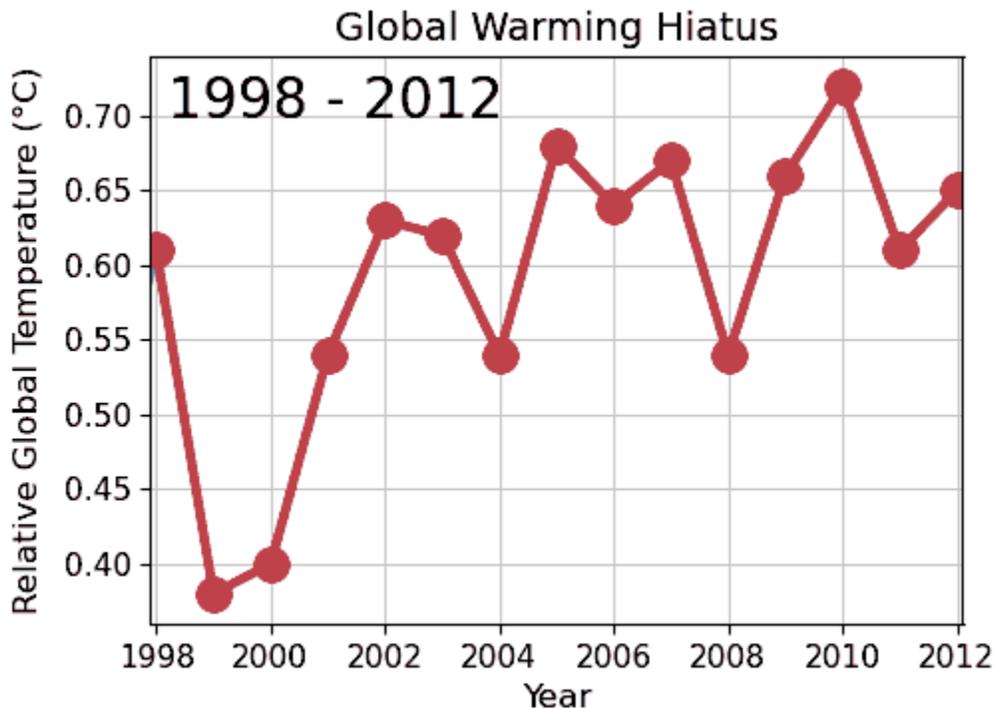


[Image source](#)

For example, looking at the graph above indicates that as ice cream sales begin to increase, so does the rate at which violent crimes are committed. This implies that one causes the other, right? But when we actually look closer, we can realize the common factor that these two things share is that they increase in the summertime: ice cream is more likely to be purchased when it's hot out, and violent crime is more likely to happen when people aren't stuck inside their home away from snow and ice.

As the ancient adage goes: correlation does not equal causation.

**Hiding relevant data.** Leaving out certain sections of data in order to tell a specific story to the viewer can be dishonest. This can happen when people want to over-exaggerate the positive or negative aspects of a graph, make it seem like there is no relationship between two different factors, or obfuscate an underlying truth.



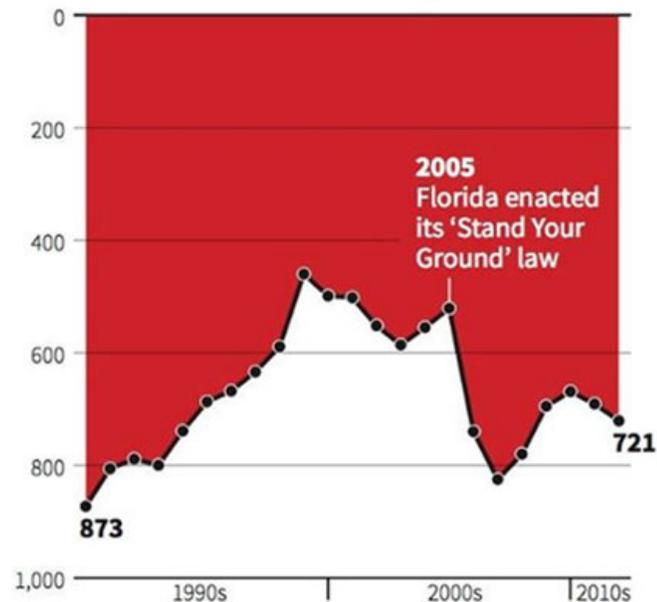
[Gif source.](#)

As shown in the example above, accounts of global warming look very different when observing the entire trend of data over time, from 1880 to 2020, in comparison to 1998 to 2012. By choosing only the data points which fit their narrative, climate change deniers can use this tactic to argue against the trend of extreme global warming.

**Unconventional visualization.** By using intentionally confusing or even backwards data visualization, charts and graphs can be made to say completely different things than what they actually represent.

## Gun deaths in Florida

Number of murders committed using firearms



Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement

C. Chan 16/02/2014

REUTERS

[Image source.](#)

Looking at the shaded graph above, it would appear at first glance that after 2005, when Florida enacted its 'Stand Your Ground' law, murders made using firearms drastically decreased. But when you look closer, the Y-axis starts at the *top*. Meaning, there was an enormous spike in firearm deaths after 2005, not a decrease.

### Data Gathering Biases and Errors

Survey results can also be skewed or misleading for reasons that have nothing to do with how someone presents the data. Whenever you look at survey results, pay attention to where the data came from in the first place, and how they might have intentionally or accidentally introduced bias just by who was sampled for the survey in the first place. Watch out for sampling bias and participation bias.

This is also why it is important for survey creators to not take their own surveys if there is a chance that they will skew the data and introduce their own personal biases to the results.

**Sampling bias.** Someone who runs a survey can accidentally or intentionally introduce bias because of which people they offer the survey to, and how.

For a real example, the earliest known therianthrope survey from 1995 says that most therianthropes are overwhelmingly white male students in the US.<sup>1</sup> However, this doesn't actually describe what's typical for therianthropes in particular. Instead, it describes what was typical for most Internet users who socialized online during the middle of the 1990s. Surveys of many other Internet groups at the time said the same thing. In later years, when more people could afford to access the Internet just for fun, the demographics of people socializing online became more diverse.

The reason for a skew is not always so easy to spot. Here's another common way we see participation bias happen in alterhuman surveys. Imagine if someone ran a survey that seemed to prove that 90% of alterhumans are therianthropes. Then it turned out that the survey had only been advertised in forums that were specifically for therianthropes. Anyone reading the survey results will be able to guess why the skew happened if one of the survey questions asks the participants to say where they heard about the survey. However, if that isn't in the survey's questions, and the survey writer doesn't say how they selected their sample, then nobody will know why or whether a sampling bias happened. That's why it's good to be transparent about your process.

Some types of sampling bias are difficult to avoid. For a real example, all alterhuman surveys that we know of were written in English, so their results say that most of us live in nations where most of the population speaks English.<sup>2</sup>

Even now, alterhuman surveys always have a significant bias toward alterhumans who are in their teens and twenties... even if those surveys came from different decades! This doesn't mean alterhumans are magically staying in their teens and twenties year after year. It could be interpreted to mean that we have a lot of turnover and most of us leave the communities in our thirties, only to be continually replaced by more young people. However, that's not what this pattern really proves. Younger age groups are more likely to see the advertisement for the survey while they're socializing in public places on the Internet. As of this writing, some social media platforms in particular tend to be more popular among younger age groups, for example, Amino, Discord, and Tumblr. The alterhumans who were young in the earlier surveys are still around, but they're not hearing about the surveys because they hang out in different places.

**Participation bias.** Even if someone hears about a survey, they still have to decide whether they want to take or finish the survey. The way the survey gets introduced, how long it is, and what kinds of questions it asks have a tendency to attract or scare off different types of participants. That's participation bias.

For example, if your survey asks very personal questions about sexuality, you should give a content warning first. That's the right thing to do, for reasons of consent and ethics. But the warning tends to scare off some sorts of people. People who have sexual trauma, are sex-repulsed, on the asexual spectrum, or are members of certain religions and cultures that

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<sup>1</sup> Asikaa.

<sup>2</sup> Devin Proctor, "On being nonhuman." pp. 72-73.

have taboos about talking about sexuality, may not be inclined to take your survey. Even if you didn't give a content warning first, any of these people would likely quit the survey early because it makes them uncomfortable. The warning also tends to attract some sorts of people who are comfortable being open about their sexuality or enjoy sharing about it. For example, people who are into kink or promiscuity in actual practice, and members of religions and cultures that don't view sexuality as so taboo. Any survey that asks in-depth questions about sexuality will unavoidably show a participation bias toward looking more sexually adventurous than what is really characteristic of the whole group.<sup>3</sup>

**Reporting bias.** This type of bias happens when people give inaccurate information about themselves and their experiences. This form of bias isn't always malicious, although it also includes individuals who intentionally lie to skew results. More often this kind of bias occurs when someone, intentionally or unintentionally, gives more socially desirable responses. This bias can also occur when participants misremember certain personal factors or experiences they have had, when participants experience hindsight bias, and when participants are attempting to predict future theoretical emotional states or actions.

For an imaginary example, a Likert scale where someone ranks the statement, "The 'So You Want To Run A Community Survey' article is amazing!" on a 1-5 rating from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' before they have fully read through this entire article is an instance of emotion forecasting. Someone is making an effort to predict their future emotional state and opinions surrounding the article, but they don't technically know yet if they will feel that way by the end as they have not yet finished the piece.

**Measurement error.** Measurement errors can happen in any attempt to quantify any type of data. They can happen in how surveys gather data when participants answer questions in unexpected ways, take a question to mean something different than intended, or even just answer it wrong by mistake. Measurement errors can also happen if you're asking the wrong questions for what you intend to measure. A famous example of this is that the IQ test was supposed to measure whether somebody is intelligent, but it turned out to only measure whether someone is familiar with white middle-class culture.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel J. Levitin, *A Field Guide to Lies*, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Levitin, *A Field Guide to Lies*, p. 65.

## A list of previous surveys of alterhuman communities

Many alterhuman communities have run surveys before. This is a bibliography of them, which we have annotated with some details like how many people responded, what else is important about that survey, and what we think that survey did well or could have done better. This is constructive criticism to help us make better surveys in the future. Think for yourself. Look at the surveys themselves, and use what you've learned to decide what you think of them. Use them for historical background to see what has changed. Use what you've learned to think about what went right or wrong with them. See if you can think of better ways to ask questions like theirs when you run your own survey. One common flaw that most of them have is that they have accepted responses from minors. Remember, this field of research says that you can't ethically use responses from minors, because they can't consent. Be forewarned that you might not want to read these at work or in a public place, because many of these surveys asked detailed questions about sexuality. Yes, even surveys that allowed responses from minors. It doesn't take a lot of thought to see how that's an especially bad ethical problem. Plus, controversial questions about sexuality had the tendency to be worded in the most unclear and confusing ways of any sort of questions, so think twice about what those results seem to say.

Corv. "General 'Heartedness Survey." August 9, 2021.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeAnNYcu9HSbskja6WIEdjNDOfx7SwJE1dXaP8JzFC8aYlhOg/viewanalytics>

120 responses total. The target audience was otherhearted individuals. The survey author went into detail online on what she believes she could have improved upon within the survey, including that she forgot an "other" option for several of the questions and did not include concepthearted individuals.<sup>5</sup> The survey also did not define the terminology it was using, which may have led to some confusion for participants.

Anomaly (PluralAnomaly). "Otherkin and System survey." March 19, 2020.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1rw6GNrNniLzW8SjK3\\_VtPER8kfWvtFMpY51l\\_bgN9s/viewanalytics?pli=1&pli=1](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1rw6GNrNniLzW8SjK3_VtPER8kfWvtFMpY51l_bgN9s/viewanalytics?pli=1&pli=1)

88 responses total. This survey was originally meant to close on April 1, 2020, but instead closed in 2022. The target audience was systems who are a part of or who otherwise know of the otherkin community. The survey did not ask participants for demographic information, so it is impossible to know what ages the survey respondents are.

Anthropomorphic Research Project. "International Furry Survey: Summer 2011."

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200524081638/https://sites.google.com/site/anthropomorphicresearch/past-results/international-furry-survey-summer-2011>

Nearly 2000 responses total, from furies and non-furies, and that's after removing responses from minors. The target audience was furies, 166 of whom also happened to be therianthropes, and 89 otherkin. They collected basic demographic information as well as how

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<sup>5</sup> Cory, "General 'Heartedness Survey Results!" Nonhuman National Park.  
<https://nonhumannationalpark.boards.net/thread/637/>

they felt about their fursona and the furry fandom, and psychological wellbeing. About the latter, the researchers concluded, “Results from this survey replicated [our previous] findings, suggesting no statistically significant differences between furies, therians and non-furies as measured by self-esteem scales and depression scales. As such, we have again found no evidence to support the claim that furry represents some maladjustment or problem, as furies seem to lead just as fulfilling lives and be just as happy with themselves as non-furies.”

Anthropomorphic Research Project. “Anthrocon 2012 & IARP 2-Year Summary.”  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20220824074708/https://sites.google.com/site/anthropomorphicresearch/past-results/anthrocon-2012-iarp-2-year-summary>

1065 responses total, collected at a furry convention. The target audience was furies, some of whom happen to be therianthropes. For a control group, they also collected 802 responses on the Internet from people who weren't furies. They also compared these results with the results of six previous studies. They asked respondents basic demographic questions, as well as some specifically furry-related questions. For example, to what degree they felt human, and whether they would want to become fully nonhuman if such an option existed.

They also found this about therians: “Therians appear indistinguishable to furies with respect to psychological well-being, self-esteem, identity, physical health or fantasy measures, but have different beliefs with respect to their species, feeling that it is a deeper part of their being with which they more strongly identify.”

Asikaa, ">>> THE GREAT AHHW SURVEY! <<< [repost]," alt.horror.werewolves, February 20 1996,

<https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!topic/alt.horror.werewolves/OcrxF8eZxKQ>

25 respondents total. The target audience was therianthropes. This is the oldest known survey of the therianthrope community. Unfortunately, its sample size is small, and its questions weren't asked well. For example, it asks about trivia such as hair length. Several later surveys for the therianthrope community used the same list of questions.

AwakenedDragon. “General alterhuman survey.” October 18, 2020.  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-iMGmAYMQINVw9A08HQTEahmy-Bxn9Q4Qbz8HRvXPe0/edit>

160 responses total. The target audience was largely otherkin, despite the survey's name. The survey asked questions about participant's experiences with their kintypes, such as dysphoria, descriptions, and how much they affected the participant's lives. The raw data for this survey was never posted or is lost, and it interviewed minors, making the data difficult to use for other research purposes.

Azalea System, “Kinmunity Survey.” Tumblr. September 12, 2017.  
<https://www.tumblr.com/azalea-garden/165276538995/i-wrote-a-survey-for-the-kinmunity>

Closed. The results are currently unavailable.

Citrakāyah, “Therian Census,” Werelist. August 13, 2013.  
<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B4uX28ws5wsHLWpMWEJjWXhYeHc/edit> .

112 respondents total. The target audience was therianthropes. These results are not publicly viewable, only by requesting access to the Google Doc. It asks the same questions established by the 1996 AHWW survey.

C0NN1E. "Robot/machine-identified individuals: What kind of machine do you identify as?" January 21, 2022. <https://c0nn1e-0526.tumblr.com/674958976106053632>

This survey is still open, as of this writing.

Dinocanid. "POC survey results!" August 24, 2021.

<https://dinocanid.tumblr.com/post/660444385413087232>

190 respondents total. The target audiences were alterhumans and nonhumans. Only some of the results are public.

Dirt. "A Homestuck Kin survey." May 21, 2019.

<https://www.tumblr.com/dave-striider/184214351502/hs-kin>, and results:

<https://dave-striider.tumblr.com/post/185032769467/hs-kin-survey-results>, and raw data:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ytU2phygQSQI8IY4yBJHwX3VUhwe39d2hpPT8XFYV TY/edit#gid=2024836073>

1001 respondents total, when the author posted the results. It's not clear if that was the total before or after the survey author "disregarded the 40 responses that were just the lyrics to 'Hooked On a Feeling' pasted into the text box." The Google Form for the survey was never closed. In the posts advertising the survey and describing its results, the author used the word "kinnie," which sometimes means casually relating to or liking a character, rather than *being* the character in a serious fictionkin sense. The survey only asked one question, which character you were in the comic *Homestuck*, with the ability to choose as many as applied, or to write a custom response. The survey found that by far, Dave Strider was the most common character among Homestuck kinnies, "with a whopping 268 kinnies." The author produced some charts of how common other characters were as well.

EarthlyFeathers. "Otherkin survey." Tumblr, June 24, 2022?

<https://who-is-page.tumblr.com/post/687989199956262914/survey-boost-any-plans-to-publish-the-raw-data-on>

Raw data:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1b8MGnTeCGIRnn1GxNEz1OI51ZjZK6MwHBLWaz\\_4I5KQ/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1b8MGnTeCGIRnn1GxNEz1OI51ZjZK6MwHBLWaz_4I5KQ/edit?usp=sharing)

152 responses total. This survey was aimed at otherkin, and asked questions about identity, awakening, how individuals had found the community, and others. Some of its questions were confusing for participants to answer, and the survey did not ask for age ranges to identify minors' answers with, making it difficult to use for research purposes.

Eli. "Alterhumanity & gender survey." Tumblr. April 6, 2019.

<https://pantomorph.tumblr.com/post/186480726444/alterhumanity-gender-survey-results>

Approximately 427 responses, based on calculations done on the results published by the survey creator. The survey maker cleverly utilized word clouds to display the commonality of

write-in answers, but did not include percentages or categorization alongside them, making it difficult to estimate how wide the differences are between words.

Although the survey excluded minors, this survey suffered from fence-sitting in how it worded potential answers to its questions, offering both a “yes,” “no,” “unsure,” and “sometimes” answers. Without the raw data and numbers, this makes it difficult to format the survey into something usable for research (as, a “sometimes” answer is still a “yes” and would need to be re-categorized.) It is unknown if the survey defined the terminology it was using throughout the questions, which may have also contributed to respondent confusion.

Evilsexual and Calderker1an. “Otherkin, Therian, and Related Survey.” Tumblr. April 2, 2019.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSemjzmTdrYThSZr8N\\_cVtghr3SDrcmHSYssBZI2Cp1R-peoQQ/closedform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSemjzmTdrYThSZr8N_cVtghr3SDrcmHSYssBZI2Cp1R-peoQQ/closedform)

This survey is closed and it is unknown if the results were ever published.

House of Chimeras. “The Feelings Surrounding the Words ‘Species Dysphoria’ & ‘Transspecies’ Survey.” *Google Forms*. August 13, 2021.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1W8V90uefmY6\\_Tbwv4w9p\\_2ALRMc4WeuUDiAyW6DpAU0/v](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1W8V90uefmY6_Tbwv4w9p_2ALRMc4WeuUDiAyW6DpAU0/viewanalytics)  
[iewanalytics](#)

303 respondents total. The target audiences were alterhumans, nonhumans, and transspecies persons. The respondents were asked about their feelings surrounding the use of the terms species dysphoria and transspecies both in the community and outside the community.

Kinfo. 2005. <https://kinfo.livejournal.com/>

Around 400 respondents total. The target audiences were otherkin and therianthropes.

There have been a few different people who use the handle “Kinfo.” This particular individual described himself as a man living in Canada who had been born in 1945 in Finland. He said he was otherkin, but he wanted to stay private about his kintype and most other personal details for the meantime. He said he hoped his anonymity would help reduce bias. However, some potential participants viewed him with distrust *because* he wouldn’t say who he was or what angle he planned to take in his research.

Kinfo never released any of the results of his survey. His book he was working on seems to have been abandoned. His final post in 2006 said he was still working on it. We hope he’s all right, and that his project just turned out to be too difficult because of processing hundreds of surveys consisting entirely of write-in questions.

Lupa’s *A Field Guide to Otherkin* (p. 33) mentioned Kinfo as having received the most respondents of any known otherkin survey at the time. Even though Kinfo started his project with no social media followers or social connections (due to his anonymity), he received so many responses within a year because he had successful strategies for spreading it. He posted advertisements for it in many groups, asking interested people to sign up for his mailing list. In each email he sent out, he asked “that the receiver consider passing this email on to other otherkin that he or she may know.” Anybody who distributes a survey today should do this with their emails too, because you’ll be able to reach a lot of people who don’t follow social media,

which might mean a lot of people in different age groups or other demographics than we've seen in most of our surveys.

Kinmunity. "2016 Otherkin Community Survey."

<https://who-is-page.tumblr.com/post/132536344164/kinmunity-research-2016-otherkin-community-survey>

366 respondents total. The targeted audiences were otherkin, therianthropes, and some other alterhuman identities, shown in a detailed breakdown. 112 of the responses are from minors, shown in a detailed age breakdown.

Respondents reported they heard about the survey from (listed in order of most common to least) Tumblr, Kinmunity, Reddit, Facebook, Werelist, Therian Wilderness, The Otherkin Community website, Livejournal, Google+, Instagram, Feral Nature. Only one heard of it from Twitter, and a few heard of it from instant messages or emails from friends. That means it was distributed throughout our communities fairly well.

This was a very long survey that asked questions about many topics. For example, gender, orientation, ethnic background, attitudes toward other types of alterhuman identities than your own, how open you are about your non-humanity, experience of shapeshifting and species dysphoria, mental health, how you explain your non-humanity, and more. All of the questions in this survey were in a multiple-choice format, and none in a write-in format, so it's designed to mainly be useful for figuring out how common some things are among us.

It had some questions that weren't well constructed. For example, in the ones about mental illness, these didn't allow you to specify any particular mental health conditions or disabilities other than autism, which was included under the category of "mental illness." Some later questions were unclear about whether "mental illness" was supposed to mean autism too. Another strange thing is that the survey has some questions asking you to rate on a scale how religious you are, but it never asked what religion you are. Many of its multiple-choice questions that allowed so many options for fence-sitting that it is difficult to conclude anything from them. However, most of its questions were good ideas for topics that we'd like to see other surveys ask about.

The link above is to an advertisement for the survey. The results of the survey survive in some private archives, but are no longer available in any public archive, as far as we know.

Leviathan. "On the Fall." Date?

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe4GOhMbVXGC7YZpfCQqMeM1ZFJbXV\\_8pm2el mPW7RscyADnA/viewanalytics](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe4GOhMbVXGC7YZpfCQqMeM1ZFJbXV_8pm2el mPW7RscyADnA/viewanalytics)

90 respondents total. The target audience was angel otherkin who believe they came from an Abrahamic (mostly Christian) idea of Heaven and/or who experienced a Fall from Heaven. The survey's focus was about what angel otherkin believed about the Fall from Heaven. The survey didn't ask about the respondents' age or other common demographic questions. Because it didn't have questions confirming whether the respondents were members of the target group, a significant part of the respondents weren't. The survey was designed mainly around write-in options. Some multiple-choice questions that allowed respondents to write their own answer resulted in respondents writing in answers that were redundant with what was already in the list of multiple-choice answers.

Limio. "Alterhumanity and neurodivergence." Tumblr. June 18, 2022.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScaUFDnDMeykmoZLLg2\\_RMRf8gQGZSYVV6PUEIJtuUrYP2tnA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScaUFDnDMeykmoZLLg2_RMRf8gQGZSYVV6PUEIJtuUrYP2tnA/viewform)

This survey is still open, and may be used for a future OtherCon panel.

Lopori, "Alterhuman and Sexuality Survey Results," Google Docs, 2020,

<https://goddamnitlopori.tumblr.com/post/639799806560239616/alterhumanity-and-sexuality-survey-the-results> .

153 respondents total. The target audiences were alterhumans, and it has a detailed breakdown of how many responses were from otherkin, therianthropes, fictionkin, plural systems, and many other alterhuman identities. To get useful data out of this, we would need the raw data so that we could delete the responses from minors and non-alterhumans. It asked detailed questions about feelings and experiences around gender and sexuality.

Lorålyndae, "Therian Community Survey #1" 25 February 2021,

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfhV7jqm5znEoNQ-V6Uc9sIUBZ8RXF8xidHj-0MsDJOWKHxDw/viewanalytics>

559 respondents total. The target audiences were otherkin and therianthropes, and it didn't differentiate which. 165 of the responses came from minors. 46 of the responses came from people who said they were neither otherkin nor therianthropes. To get useful data out of this, we would need the raw data so that we could delete the responses from minors and non-alterhumans. It asked detailed questions about feelings and experiences around gender and sexuality.

Lupa (lupagreenwolf). *A Field Guide to Otherkin*. 14 September 2005,

<https://lupagreenwolf.livejournal.com/492539.html>.

131 respondents total (including Lupa, herself). Target audiences were otherkin, therianthropes, vampires, and fictionkin. 11 of the responses are from minors. The survey was distributed only on Lupa's personal blog. Her blog had a good following because she was already known as a Pagan author. All the questions asked for essay format answers. Some of the questions were age, general location, sex, gender, what their kintype is, if they experience phantom limbs, the origins of their otherkinity, what their awakening was like, how being otherkin affects their daily life, how it affects their spirituality, if they practiced magick, mental health, how open they are about being otherkin, and if they know any otherkin in real life.

The most significant bias we can see in the survey is that, although it asks questions about spirituality and magick, it didn't ask respondents what their religion was. This reflects Lupa's unstated assumption that everyone involved was Pagan. Later, this assumption contributed to non-otherkin misinterpreting otherkin as a Pagan new religious movement, as argued Danielle Kirby, one of the first academics to write about otherkin. From there, other authors who cited Kirby perpetuated Kirby's misconception that Otherkin is a religion. We can see this as an example of how an easily overlooked bias can build up to something that moves further and further away from the facts of the situation.

Merry. "Alterhuman/Kin Survey." <https://sukimas.tumblr.com/166079402777>  
Results haven't been posted. Google Forms says that the survey itself has been deleted.

OtherkindStudy. "Otherkind Survey #1." Tumblr. April 4, 2022.

Summarized results:

<https://www.tumblr.com/otherkindstudy/681120187582398464/thank-you-all-for-your-responses-theyve-been?source=share>

Raw data: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RmY-AtWTxHm0PTbwF9or9AzksbP7Y2-d/view>

171 responses total. The target audience was otherkin. This survey asked questions about the participants' abilities and experiences in dreams. Both the summarized data and raw data was published, and the survey creator also made and ran an identical survey for human-identifying-humans as a control group for comparison. Unfortunately, the raw data was published in a .PDF, making it difficult to work with, and the age demographics of participants are unknown.

OtherkindStudy. "Otherkind Survey #2." Tumblr. April 14, 2022.

<https://www.tumblr.com/otherkindstudy/682252771064512512/otherkind-study-2-awakenings-re-sults?source=share>

199 responses total. The target audience was otherkin, and the survey focused on questions about the questioning and awakening process. The raw data was never released.

PinkDolphin. "Species Dysphoria Within Alterhumans (therian/otherkin/kith etc)." October 15, 2020.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1XMvXz-F\\_ks3saJr6ADYOfx4S6LE\\_btU2FHqBdN-grFo/viewanalytics](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1XMvXz-F_ks3saJr6ADYOfx4S6LE_btU2FHqBdN-grFo/viewanalytics)

279 responses total. The target audience was various alterhuman identities, shown in a detailed background. Some responses are from people who say they are not alterhuman at all. It was supposed to only allow responses from people age 13 or older. However, a few responses from even younger children haven't been deleted. To get useful data out of this, we would need the raw data so that we could delete the responses from minors and non-alterhumans. It asked about gender identity, orientation, alterhuman experiences (whether you prefer spiritual/psychological explanations).

PinkDolphin. "Therianthropy and Gender Experience," 31 May 2020,

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Eamup4muY5irH1Zv9kxG18yM2yoezh\\_z0sZP6agAtdk/viewanalytics](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Eamup4muY5irH1Zv9kxG18yM2yoezh_z0sZP6agAtdk/viewanalytics) .

200 respondents total. The target audience was therianthropes and otherkin. The survey asked respondents whether they were therianthropes, otherkin, or both, but it didn't allow them to say that they were neither. That means we have no way of knowing how many responses were from people who shouldn't have participated. 61.9% of the responses were from minors. The survey asked questions about gender and sexuality.

Rani. "Alterhuman survey." Tumblr. December 13, 2018.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdV50qYb6zW0GyLFEqDHkocmsnGEedh3vh7xQeGePbKj2NsSQ/closedform>

This survey is closed and the results have not been posted.

Scribner, Orion. "Community views on the Simple Intro to Otherkin."

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1EU8bkSSLMng2wAo0zMEfDeUDgh1PMMDsaVFskZ3S6vw/e/dit#responses> And some more processing of some of the responses, with help from Page Shepard:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DrM2WYaGnz5eopclFpVjYrqSolAY1Wrg-aO2NAn4u1w/edit#gid=1315422522>

102 responses total. The target audiences were otherkin, therianthropes, alterhumans, and nonhumans. It has a detailed breakdown of which of those communities the respondent identified with. There were options for saying that you were not alterhuman at all, and there are zero responses in that category. Unfortunately, it didn't ask about age, so we have no way to know how many responses were from minors. The purpose of this survey was for feedback on an essay that Scribner was rewriting, so most of its questions were about that. Some of its questions give an idea of what the communities were like and what their opinions were, though.

Shaun. "Alterhuman Survey." April 10, 2022.

<https://extranth.tumblr.com/post/681172813252608000/alterhuman-survey>

This form is closed and the results either were not posted or have been lost.

Skitten. "Otherkin Survey."

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeQIokv-D6X5R\\_XV1w5ORFQNIgPnNgh7ZbsaXppwLAPgpyimog/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeQIokv-D6X5R_XV1w5ORFQNIgPnNgh7ZbsaXppwLAPgpyimog/viewform)

This survey is still open.

Swift. "Experiences of Species of Therians With Dæmons." November 19, 2021.

<https://www.tumblr.com/hraefngeyst/673053390943797248/okay-so-remember-that-survey-i-did-a-while-back?source=share>

This survey is closed. The results were never posted, but there is a Tumblr blog detailing some observations by the survey creator.

Swift. "Metaphysical Beliefs, Humanity & Species Dysphoria." May 17, 2021.

<https://www.tumblr.com/hraefngeyst/654281889974272000/survey-results-metaphysical-beliefs-humanity?source=share>

137 total responses. This survey's target audience was nonhuman-identifying individuals. The survey's intention was to see if there was any correlation between species dysphoria, theories of origin, and levels of identification with humanity. The raw data was never published and demographics were never requested of the participants, making it unknown if minors participated.

Tailcalled. "[Results] Otherkin Survey." *Imgur*. July 21 2018.

<https://imgur.com/a/dDIYEEu>.

Only 39 respondents total. The target audience was otherkin. Some responses were from minors. The author made the raw data available. This asked about kintypes, personality typology, psychology, gender, and sexuality. The kintypes were a write-in option, which the author said was difficult to have to process by hand.

Tsu (swanblood). "Nonhuman family history survey." December 22, 2011.

<https://swanblood.tumblr.com/post/14657516885/>

The original survey and its responses are lost. The target audiences were nonhumans.

Tsu (swanblood). "Nonhuman identity, abuse, and violence survey." March 3, 2012.

<https://swanblood.tumblr.com/post/18654496504/nonhuman-identity-abuse-violence-and-injury>

The original survey and its responses are lost. The target audiences were otherkin, therianthropes, and nonhumans.

In the advertisement for the survey, its author said, "Let's collect data on what otherkin/therians have experienced because of being otherkin/therian. [...] If you have a nonhuman identity, please take this survey whether or not you have been abused or injured for being nonhuman. Even if your answer to every question is 'no'. That will help the percentages to be more accurate."

Tsu (swanblood). "Species dysphoria survey." November 16, 2011.

<https://swanblood.tumblr.com/post/12903209151/>

The original survey and its responses are lost. The target audiences were everyone who experiences species dysphoria or thinks that they might be. The author said she wanted to get at least 200 responses. She planned to share the raw data with the community.

Utah, "AHWw Poll'97 - The RESULTS!" alt.horror.werewolves, November 9, 1997,

[https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups=#!searchin/alt.horror.werewolves/results\\$2097/alt.horror.werewolves/IyqSQB2DVQM/FGPjBFzqarQJ](https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups=#!searchin/alt.horror.werewolves/results$2097/alt.horror.werewolves/IyqSQB2DVQM/FGPjBFzqarQJ) .

Only 56 respondents total. The second oldest survey of the therianthrope community. It used the set of questions from the first.

White Wolf. "2013 Therian Census Results."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSZcVu97Nj4>

291 respondents. The target audience was therianthropes. It received 113 responses from people aged 10 to 19. Because of how it breaks that down, it's unclear how many were minors. It doesn't seem to have had a question asking if respondents were not therianthropes. This is a long survey that covers many common demographic questions (nationality, gender, etc) as well as experiences of therianthropy.

Who-Is-Page. "The 2021 Nonhumanity & Body Modification/Decoration Survey Results Breakdown."

<https://invisibleotherkin.neocities.org/files/BodyModification-DecorationSurveyResults.pdf>

523 responses. The target audiences were therianthropes, otherkin, nonhuman alterhumans, and similar identities. It has a detailed breakdown of which alterhuman identities

respondents had. However, it did not offer the option for participants to say that they were not any sort of alterhuman, so we don't know if any took this survey even though they were not supposed to. 111 responses were from minors. The raw data is available, so we could re-process the data to exclude responses from minors. The focus of this survey was on what sorts of body modifications, personal adornment, and gear that alterhumans have had or want to get in the future, in connection with their feelings of species dysphoria, if any.

Who-Is-Page. "Abnormal instincts." 2022.

<https://invisibleotherkin.neocities.org/Lectures.html>

560 usable responses. The target audiences were therianthropes, otherkin, and other nonhuman and alterhuman identities. The survey has a detailed breakdown of which of these identities participants had. 184 respondents were between the ages of 13 and 17. The focus of this survey was on alterhumans' experiences of a variety of instincts that most people do not have, such as a desire to use body language like their kintype.

Wulf Howl. "2012 Therianthropy Community Survey." November 12, 2012.

<https://swanblood.tumblr.com/post/19228050540/>

We're not sure if this survey is lost? The link above was to an advertisement for the survey while it was open. It said it was "a survey regarding therianthropy, in general, and its connection with psychological conditions, abuse/bullying, and a lot more. [...] it will help us to understand the psychological factors of therianthropy, as well as how prevalent bullying and discrimination are in/against the community."

The Yolcatzin System. "Otherkin linguistic survey." December 18, 2021.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1IIUB3foE7Op05GB51978QQAU0RLFoTPXAWt8MDv5vyA/closedform>

502 responses total. The target audiences were otherkin, therians, nonhumans, alterhumans, self-described "kinnies," and humans. The survey allowed respondents to choose as many identity labels as applied to them. 134 respondents chose "human." Without the raw data, we can't tell how many of the humans had other alterhuman identities as well, or how many were not alterhuman at all. 184 respondents marked their age as "19 or younger," which is not useful for determining how many minors took it. The focus of this survey was on whether people thought it sounded grammatically correct to say "I am kin with wolves," "I am otherkin of wolves," "My kintype is a wolf," "I kin wolves," and other variations.

Zana. "Otherkin and Gender."

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf7Dot2ZqmiiBFyTk9BVQSN9hFNnVSU2XE-9VDUE2tFYkhuvw/viewanalytics>

153 responses total. The target audiences were therianthropes, otherkin, alterhumans, furies, and plural systems. The survey has a breakdown of which of these identity labels that participants chose. Three participants didn't say that any of the offered alterhuman identities applied to them. The survey didn't ask about age, so we don't know how many minors participated. Many of the questions were write-in that could have been multiple choice to make data processing easier. The survey forewarned participants that a certain section would ask

detailed questions about mental health, self harm, and suicide. The survey gave participants the opportunity to skip that section, so they didn't have to see it at all if they didn't want to. That was a good solution that we should use in surveys about really sensitive topics like that.

Zeke. "Otherkin survey."

Summarized data:

<https://cdn.discordapp.com/attachments/841906365525131264/1049884025117999124/image.png>

Raw data:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1COQnbSJ2ROQODVGZ\\_RgQmDf3DbIkr00bo4EzbKT6VvM/edit#gid=1374988476](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1COQnbSJ2ROQODVGZ_RgQmDf3DbIkr00bo4EzbKT6VvM/edit#gid=1374988476)

332 responses total. The target audience was otherkin, and asked questions about kintype, demographics, and opinions on otherkinity as a concept. Some responses are from minors.

# Survey Checklist

When designing these parts of your survey, keep these things in mind.

## **Survey Description.**

Who is conducting the survey?

What is the information in the survey going to be used for?

What kinds of questions will be asked?/What is the survey's goal? (List any trigger warnings necessary!)

What user data is collected?

How will this data be protected?

How can a participant opt out after submitting their data?

When will this survey close?

OPTIONAL: How should plural systems engage with this survey?

## **Survey Questions.**

Include a question asking participants to give consent for their answers to be used.

Include a question making sure that participants are a part of the intended audience.

Include definitions for any words or terms that the average person may not know.

Put the most interesting or fun questions in the middle of your survey, and the most tedious or frustrating towards the end.

Include a question asking for general feedback on the survey at the *very end* of the survey.

## **Survey Before Public Advertisement.**

Beta test the survey among a small group for feedback.

Check for any leading or loaded questions or answers.

Repeat these steps as needed!

## **Survey Advertisement.** (Use a simplified version of the description!)

Who is conducting the survey?

What is the goal of this survey?

What will this data be used for?

Is this survey anonymous?

When will the survey end?

Include a link to your survey! **(Very important!!!)**

OPTIONAL: Include a promotional image to make your survey stand out.

## **Survey Data Processing.**

Make sure the survey is closed before you begin processing your data!

Delete any unusable responses (such as from trolls).

Anonymize your data.

Make sure that all charts and graphs are made up of accessible colors.

Make sure that all charts and graphs have descriptive captions, when possible.

Make sure that all charts and graphs are clearly labeled: that they have percentages, the amount of responses per option, titles, and anything similar.

Make sure that your charts make sense and present the data in an understandable way.

**Survey Data Publishing.**

Make sure to publish your data on a website or online storage that you can control and maintain.

Publish your anonymized raw data!

Publish your summarized data!