

Factsheet: introducing a new question on disability to Audience Finder

Audience Finder helps us all to better understand audience behaviours, motivations, experiences and demographics. It provides useful data and tools to put that understanding in vital context for informing audience development activity and helping to increase and diversify audiences. If you are a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), your funding agreement requires you to submit audience data to Audience Finder, unless you have an official exemption.

What's new?

From April 2019, a new question on disability has been introduced to the Audience Finder survey. This will change the way that Arts Council England (ACE) asks NPOs to collect data and report on audiences who identify as having a disability and/or long-term health conditions. If you've collected data using an Audience Finder survey in the past, you will recognise the following question on disability, which has been part of the Audience Finder core survey until 2018/19:

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? (*Tick one only*)

- Yes, limited a lot Yes, limited a little No Prefer not to say

From the upcoming 2019/20 data collection period, NPOs will be required to report on disability using a new question structure, as illustrated below:

Do you identify as a D/deaf or disabled person, or have a long-term health condition? (*Tick one only*)

- Yes No Prefer not to say

Why is this changing?

The new question has been drafted by ACE with the aim of moving from the *medical model* of disability to an approach more aligned to a *social model* of disability. The *social model* of disability relies on the idea that disability is defined by the barriers present in society, rather than by a diagnosed physical/mental impairment. This enables respondents to self-define based on their personal experience of disability and on the issues perceived by the individual and caused by external factors. The introduction of this question replicates the changes ACE

has already made to the way it asks for data about disability relating to the NPOs' workforce in Grantium as part of its Annual Survey.

The changes were introduced in response to conversations with disabled and D/deaf artists and professionals from across the sector and reaffirmed ACE's commitment to the *social model* of disability, which recognises that it is the physical and attitudinal barriers in wider society that disable people and create barriers to access and engagement.

Having adopted a *social model* approach to capturing data on the arts and cultural workforce through the annual survey, ACE has seen an increased response rate and more reliable workforce data relating to disability. Replicating this change in Audience Finder brings consistency to the data collected by NPOs and the Arts Council and ACE believes that it will lead to higher and more accurate responses from disabled audiences.

How will this impact my data collection and analysis?

For NPOs, the change to the new disability question is not optional and will be automatically made to all surveys that are set up to run from the financial year April 2019 to March 2020 and onwards. Results in the new question format will automatically be reflected in your Audience Finder dashboard from April 2019 onwards.

NPOs should note that introducing the new *social model* of disability question means that there will no longer be a direct comparison possible to results formerly collected in response to the old *medical model* question. Direct comparison of the new question to Census level benchmarks, which use the *medical model* question, will also no longer be possible, as there isn't yet a national standard *social model* of disability question that can be used instead. The national and regional Census data will still be available on your dashboard, in the National Data section. Survey data collected in previous years won't be affected. You will still be able to see all the results of any surveys using the old question that you have collected in the past.

It is our recommendation that NPOs do not continue to ask the former *medical model* of disability question in addition to the new *social model* question, as this is likely to reduce clarity, and potentially prove frustrating for survey respondents. However, it is at the discretion of individual NPOs to choose to continue to ask the *medical model* question if they really wish to, in addition to the *social model* question. The Audience Agency will still enable these organisations to additionally ask the *medical model* question as one of their 5 free [premium questions](#).

If you are not a National Portfolio Organisation, you will be able to choose which of the two question formats you want to use in any new survey.

What do I need to do to ensure I am compliant?

For NPOs who use Audience Finder to directly submit their surveys, no specific action will be necessary in relation to setting up the new disability question. The Audience Agency will add the new *social model* question by default to all new surveys when NPOs contact us to set their new surveys up for 2019/20.

If an NPO chooses to use an alternate method of data collection to Audience Finder, they must ensure they ask all core questions in the Audience Finder survey questionnaire and in exactly the same way. This will enable the NPO to input or transfer their data into Audience Finder to generate their annual report. For this reason, it is particularly important that you note the precise wording of the new question and answer codes, which you will be required to ask your audience. An example questionnaire is provided for reference [here](#).

Further details:

If you have any further questions about the reasons behind the changes to the disability question please email NPO.Survey@artscouncil.org.uk or call Customer Services on 0161 934 4317. For all other enquires please contact surveyteam@theaudienceagency.org.