

Race, Ethnicity, and Language Data Gathering Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

At Premera, we've been on our journey to make healthcare more accessible and inclusive for our members. We believe that it is not only about making sure everyone has equitable access to quality, affordable healthcare, but also ensuring the resources and opportunities are tailored to fit the specific needs of a person or community.

Beginning in 2025, Premera will begin collecting race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data directly from our members through two different methods:

- A digital questionnaire available on the member website and through Premera's flagship app
- A pilot program using 834 enrollment files from employers to enroll new members into their health plan

Providing the information is optional.

We have been very intentional as we've built out our health equity program for our members. Data is key to our program. Without voluntary data from our members, we cannot identify and address health inequities in a meaningful way.

For additional information about Premera's REL data collection strategy, contact the Health Equity team through Health.Equity@premera.com.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
What is REL?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• REL stands for race, ethnicity, and language.• Race refers to the social construction and categorization of people based on perceived shared physical traits that result in the maintenance of a sociopolitical hierarchy.• Ethnicity is a characterization of people based on having a shared culture (e.g., language, food, music, dress, values, and beliefs) related to common ancestry and shared history.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is the specific communicative system used by a particular group of speakers, with its distinctive vocabulary, grammar, and phonological system.
How is REL data used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct-reported REL data from our members is crucial to developing clinical quality interventions for improving healthcare. If we don't know who our members are and the disparities our member populations are facing, we cannot help to improve health outcomes.
Is collecting this information mandatory?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premera receives accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). NCQA accredits and certifies a wide range of health care organizations and manages the evolution of HEDIS®, the performance measurement tool used by more than 90 percent of the nation's health plans. • In line with the NCQA requirement, health plans must collect and report Race, Ethnicity, and Language (REL) data for all members. The mandate requires that health plans capture REL data for at least 80% of their member population to ensure equitable care and reduce health disparities by 1/1/25. Due to our accreditation, we adhere to mandates outlined by NCQA. • Collecting REL data helps identify and address disparities in healthcare, ensuring equitable and culturally appropriate care for all members, as emphasized by the NCQA. • The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires that we collect this data for our Individual plans in Alaska. We anticipate that Washington State will also make collecting this data a requirement in 2025. • For members, providing their REL data is 100% optional. While we encourage members to provide this information, there is no requirement mandating they comply with the request.
How will you collect the information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will have a digital questionnaire available through our secure member portal on Premera.com and our mobile app beginning January 2025. • The questionnaire is optional to complete and will provide members with the ability to indicate their race, ethnicity, and preferred language.

<p>Is the data stored securely?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When member REL data is received, it is securely stored in Premera’s EDW (Enterprise Database Warehouse) and is only accessible by Premera authorized data analysts. The data will be used to improve our programs and products to better meet the needs of our members. • Storage will adhere to the same access restrictions and legal/ethical guidelines as other personal protected information (PPI) as mandated by federal laws.
<p>Will the information be used for benefits or eligibility?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. Member REL data will not affect a member’s health plan benefits, premiums, or coverage eligibility. Nor will it impact an employer’s premiums or costs.
<p>What will the information be used for?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For CMS and HEDIS, the information will be used for recordkeeping and presenting data on race and ethnicity. • Premera will, in the future, analyze the data to design programs and services that address the health disparities experienced by our members.
<p>What data is actually being collected?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a revision to their Statistical Policy Directive that details a consistent approach to race and ethnicity data format. There are seven minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity. • The questionnaire will collect a member’s race, ethnicity, and a member’s preferred language. For a list of the 7 categories, refer to the OMB Standards for REL Data.
<p>What is your REL data strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without the right data, it’s hard to quantify the extent of health disparities impacting the health and well-being of communities across race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status. • To do this in a relevant and timely manner, we first need to understand our members through the collection of direct REL data. • The best source of patient data is the patient. Self-reported data is considered the gold standard data source. • While 80% is a lofty goal and the mandated target, this will be an ongoing program.
<p>What’s your timeline?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning in January 2025, Premera will have a questionnaire available on the secure member website and Premera mobile app. This will be an ongoing program because our membership can be fluid.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members will be able to update their REL information if needed. • The survey is only available when a member accesses their secure account through the website or mobile app. • Again, this is voluntary, and members can ignore the request. • For our employer groups, we will begin a pilot with a few groups where we'll be testing the gathering of REL data through the submission of 834 enrollment files and the survey. • Groups participating in the pilot will also be an influencing partner in testing the collection process, campaign materials, and communication methods.
I want to encourage my employees to complete the survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you. We will be sending emails to members starting in January 2025. • We also have easy-to-use templates on B'Link that you can customize for your business.
Can I opt into the employer pilot?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're working with a few specific groups and then will begin rolling out the program to additional groups throughout 2025. • If you're interested, please contact Health.Equity@Premera.com.
Can I have access to the data you collect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to privacy and HIPAA requirements, we will not share the individual data. • For the current mandated reporting requirements, we are only sharing aggregated data and not individual information as required.
FOR GROUPS PARTICIPATING IN THE 834 PILOT	
What are the requirements to participate in the pilot?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main criteria is that you currently submit 834 data to Premera on a regular basis. • Next, we need commitment from you and your leadership team to provide the data and that you are gathering the data in a way that meets federal and state requirements. • We will kick off the effort with a call between your technical resources and ours to plan the development, transmission, and testing of the 834 file REL element. • We will have a checklist you can use within your company if you're selected to participate in the 834 pilot.
I don't currently gather REL data from my employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you don't currently gather data, you can still help us by encouraging your employees to complete the survey on the Premera.com portal or in the Premera mobile app.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have easy-to-use templates on B'Link you can customize for your business.
How do I get started?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We encourage you to use our REL Data Participation Checklist to gain support from all levels in your organization.• Once you're ready, we'll schedule some pilot sessions with your team to test the data feeds.