

NSVRC Evaluation Toolkit Case Studies

Conducting a Statewide Survey Focused on Risk and Protective Factors

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Project Description

Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) evaluates the [Rape Prevention & Education \(RPE\)](#) efforts in Michigan, which are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The team at MPHI conducted a statewide survey focused on risk and protective factors for sexual violence perpetration in Winter 2018/2019. Over a thousand Michigan residents took part in a survey that will be used to focus strategies to prevent sexual assault, abuse, and harassment in the state. This project also allowed the evaluation team to test potential survey items for future evaluations. It provides a baseline for comparison should Michigan be able to repeat the survey in the future.

Approach

After conducting a review of the literature and secondary data sources to see what other state and [national data existed](#) (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance [YRBS], Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System [BRFSS], National Crime Victim Survey [NCVS], American Community Survey [ACS], National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey [NISVS]), the team decided to focus on the following risk and protective factors:

- Connectedness (to neighborhood, workplace, place of worship, and family)
- Economic Supports (access to paid family leave and impacts of childcare on economic choices)
- Social Norms (related to consent and gender)
- Support for Survivors (rape myth acceptance, perceived support of justice system and peers, and intention to support survivors and speak up about sexual assault)

Tip

Review the Data Collection Process.

Take a look at the additional details on data collection and weighting at the end of the [survey report](#).

Validated questionnaires from campus climate inventories and research in related fields were used and adapted for the survey design. After receiving Institutional Review Board approval and settling on a contract with a survey contractor, a random sample of 15,000 households were sent an invitation letter and a paper survey. Participants also had the option of completing the survey online. If the sampled address did not complete the survey, a final reminder letter (with the URL to the survey) and hardcopy survey were mailed approximately four weeks later. A \$10 incentive was offered for survey completion. Households in areas heavily populated by African Americans were oversampled, in hopes of recruiting a sufficient sample of this second-largest racial group to allow for statistical comparison with white Michiganders. The response rate was 8.66%. Over 1087

individuals (88%) completed at least 90% of the survey, and 749 (60%) individuals completed all questions. The oversampling of African Americans was successful, as the proportion of surveys received from this population resembled the proportion of African Americans living in the state. The team worked closely with a survey consultant to weight the data according to census information.

The team produced an [initial report](#) with the survey outputs and created a [data-sharing policy](#) and request form so that researchers and public health practitioners can use this data in ways to benefit their own work.

Lessons Learned

The team initially envisioned success as the survey data being used to inform sexual violence prevention programming efforts in Michigan, as well as being made available and useful for other researchers and data-savvy practitioners. Just months after a dissemination website for the data report and action resources was established, multiple researchers requested access to the survey data to publish content/contribute to the knowledge base, and several partners want to adapt the survey protocol for youth and other communities around the state. The keys to this success are found in the lessons learned below. For those that are excited about the possibility of conducting a survey in their state or territory, here are some lessons learned:

- **Time.** It is important to plan that everything will take much longer than you expect.
- **Data duplication.** It is tough to avoid duplicating data while still using validated survey items and scales.

Tip

Engage Stakeholders. Throughout every step of the survey development process, the team worked collaboratively with a group of sexual violence and/or survey research professionals. The expert “panel” included representation from [National Sexual Violence Resource Center \(NSVRC\)](#), campus climate survey experts, the Injury and Violence Prevention folks at the [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#), [ACES](#) experts, the [Michigan Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence \(MCEDSV\)](#), reproductive health, and more. The team engaged stakeholders in the following ways:

- facilitated a brainstorming discussion on potential constructs and indicators,
- requested resources on existing scales for measurement,
- invited existing stakeholders to bring new partners to the table to give feedback,
- involved stakeholders in topical discussions and statistical considerations for the survey instrument and sampling approach,
- facilitated a sense-making session on the initial findings, and
- invited stakeholders to continue engagement throughout our action-planning.

This ongoing dialogue helped maintain focus on the specific needs for their state and helped them determine what could be accomplished with the survey.

Use Data to Build Compelling Messages about Prevention. Using data to help describe the problem to be addressed and to identify possible solutions was critical to this process. [This guide](#) can help you fine-tune your messages.

- **Intergroup analysis.** If you want to look at differences between groups, you must plan *in advance* to ensure your sample will be sufficient to do so.
- **Usefulness.** You have to get stakeholders invested in the survey, which sometimes involves convincing them of its usefulness at many points along the way.
- **Share the expenses.** Survey research can be incredibly expensive. Consider ideas for how to leverage special funds and/or encourage partners to support it financially. (Note that the survey can be scaled up or down depending on the resources and partnership.)
- **Consultant communication.** Be sure to use clear communication with your vendor and set up expectations from the beginning.
- **Teamwork.** Work with LOTS of advisors! See tip below for ideas. You will appreciate this effort later in the game.
- And lastly, remember that there is a steep **learning curve**. Doing a statewide survey is not the same as what we usually tackle as evaluators.

References

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