

Media Survey

The news and advertising media influence people's opinions and perceptions. A media survey is one way to find out how people in your community perceive nutrition and physical activity issues. To conduct a media survey you study the media, and in this case you study the media's coverage of nutrition, physical activity, and related health issues.

How to Conduct a Media Survey

1. Decide who will be involved in conducting the media survey including the lead contact.
2. Identify the topics you will study, e.g. child fitness stories, fruit and vegetable messages, diabetes stories, physical activity messages, etc.
3. Decide if you will track local media sources only, national sources only, or some combination of local and national.
4. Select a time period that you will study the media. The ideal time period will depend on several things including the size of the media market. For example, if you are conducting a media survey in an urban center you may study the media for a few weeks given the quantity of media available. However, a rural community with a community access television station and a local newspaper produced weekly may require a few months of study to get a sense of what the community is exposed to locally.
5. Choose the media outlets you will study – television, newspaper, on-line chat rooms, etc. See the Media Outlets handout for guidance.
6. Track and record the media hits. A media hit is anytime your topic is mentioned during the time period you selected and in the media outlets your coalition chose to track. A newspaper editorial on eliminating the state physical education requirement in grades K-6 and a radio PSA on recommended levels of physical activity for preschoolers could each count as one media hit on the topic of children and physical activity.
7. Tabulate. You can count the number of hits and the number of people reached. You can also calculate the percentage of media hits on your topic(s). For example, you can count the number of headlines that reference breastfeeding in your community newspaper and divide this by the total number of headlines in your community newspaper. Calculating the percentage takes more time, but is good information for evaluation.

Tips

- Involve someone who has media expertise such as a local reporter or editor.
- Study a variety of media outlets. If your community assessment is focused on a specific population, include media outlets that the specific population uses frequently. For example, if you are conducting a community assessment focused on tweens (children ages 8 to 13 years), then you might study some of the national magazines frequently read by this target group.
- A local school may have a media literacy class that you could involve.
- Many national and large media sources catalog the content of their stories and editorials. Contact someone at the media source for assistance. You can do an online key word search through the archives of some media sources.

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Media Outlets

Below is a list of media sources to study when conducting a media survey. Use the Media Survey Tracking Chart on the next page to catalog your findings.

Television

- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Paid advertising
- News stories
- Public affairs programs
- Talk shows
- News magazine programs
- Special programs
- Community calendars
- Community opinion programs
- Management editorials

Radio

- PSAs
- Paid ads
- News stories
- Public affairs program
- Talk shows
- Packaged series
- Community calendar
- Management editorials

Community events

- Health events
- Charitable/fundraising events
- Civic events
- Community organization meetings
- School events

World Wide Web

- Chat rooms
- Websites
- Blogs

Newsletters

- Stories
- Paid advertisement

Print materials

- Books
- Fliers
- Posters
- Brochures/booklets

Newspaper

- Paid ads
- News stories
- Editorials
- Letters to the editor
- Feature columns
- Special sections (health, local events, etc.)

Ads or announcements posted in public places

- Public transportation
- Billboards
- Park benches
- Other

Schools

- In-school television
- School newspaper
- Staff-written newsletters
- Student-written newsletters
- In-school advertisements (closed-circuit television, billboards, sporting events sponsors, etc.)

Media Survey Tracking Chart

Use this table to track the results of your media survey.

Media Outlet	Topic	Frequency	Audience/ No. Reached	“Take Home” Message
Example: Channel 12 News	Feature on Type II diabetes	2-min. segment (aired 3 X)	Local viewers (24,000)	Local doctors seeing children with this typically-adult disease

Summary of findings:

- 1) What health issues are receiving the most media coverage in your community (both in terms of frequency and audience reached)?
- 2) Which media outlets might help you reach your community?