



The Australian Prevention
Partnership Centre
Systems and solutions for better health

Key informant interviews

What it is

Key informant interviews are qualitative interviews with people who have knowledge and understanding on a specific issue or problem being addressed in a community. Semi-structured interviews consist of a series of open-ended questions designed to draw out responses about particular topics. They also provide opportunities for interviewees to add information from their own knowledge and perspectives and to reflect on their own practices and assumptions. Qualitative tools such as interviews with key informants may identify new areas of interest and new knowledge that may not have emerged using more structured or pre-determined data collection tools.

How we applied it

To deepen our understanding of the prevention system in the Prevention Tracker communities, the research team undertook 20 to 25 key informant interviews with local stakeholders in each community. Stakeholders included individuals from a range of organisations including government agencies (federal, state and local), businesses, not-for-profits and community groups.

The interview questions were adapted following a pilot in one community and covered themes such as the respondent's organisation and its role in prevention; the prevention workforce; partnerships with other agencies; leadership and governance in the prevention system; resources for prevention; the use of information and evidence in decision making; and beliefs about prevention. These themes were adapted from the World Health Organization's building blocks for health systems.¹ Respondents were also asked to add any further comments about areas of prevention that may not have been fully addressed by the pre-identified themes.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face or by phone. Interviews were audio-recorded (with permission) and then transcribed and coded using both deductive and inductive coding.² We used the coded data to explore various aspects of the prevention system within each community and to help us elaborate on data collected using other systems tools such as social network analysis and liveability indicators.

What we learnt about how to use this method

The techniques of qualitative interviewing and data analysis are well known and described in the literature.^{3,4,5,6} We added a **systems thinking** lens to the analysis of the qualitative data, looking for systems concepts that cut across several Prevention Tracker data sets. For example, we looked for interview data coded to 'beliefs about prevention', to uncover the language people use when talking about prevention to help to help bring out underlying perceptions (mental models) of how the prevention system works?

What we learnt about the prevention system from using this method

The key informant interviews provided insights into the different parts of the prevention system including the nature of leadership; the structure of the prevention workforce; different sources of evidence and information and the credibility and utility of each; norms and beliefs about prevention within the prevention systems as well as within the wider community; and financial and resource-dependent barriers and enablers for action.

The qualitative interview data also helped to make sense of some of the patterns found in other data sets such as the differences in the social network analysis maps around the ways in which organisations are connected within communities. Interview data helped to explain some of the patterns in the programs and activities found in the system inventory.

Where to go if you need more information

Visit our website to access a series of factsheets on the Prevention Tracker project covering topics such as group model building, key informant interviews, social network analysis, system action learning. Click on the Resources tab at: <https://preventioncentre.org.au/our-work/research-projects/learning-from-local-communities-prevention-tracker-expands/>

References

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