

FOCUS GROUPS: A QUICK GUIDE

What Is a Focus Group?

- A focus group is a group discussion on a particular topic that is guided by a moderator.
- The moderator, also known as a facilitator, leads the conversation using a scripted set of questions.
 - A focus group can also have a co-moderator and notetaker.
- **Participants:** Typically, six to 10 individuals participate.
 - Groups with more than 10 participants can pose challenges as they can be difficult to control and limit an individual's opportunity to share insight(s).
- Things to consider when recruiting:
 - The purpose of the study.
 - The complexity of the topic.
 - Participants' level of interest related to the topic.
 - The number of questions you want to ask.

When to Use a Focus Group

- When you are developing a new program or service, a focus group can provide an in-depth look at how a new program or service will be utilized and received.
- Focus groups can be used to evaluate an established program or health policy.
- Additionally, focus groups can be a component of a mixed-mode research study. Some questions are not easily asked in a survey; therefore, a focus group can be used to learn more about the experiences and perspectives of the survey participants.
- Lastly, focus groups can be utilized to conduct a qualitative research study to explore reasons for behaviors, attitudes and motivations.

References

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- [2] Namey, E., Guest, G., McKenna, K., & Chen, C. (2016). Evaluating bang for the buck: A cost-effectiveness comparison between individual interviews and focus groups based on thematic saturation levels. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 37(3), 425-440. DOI: 10.1177/1098214016630406.
- [3] Pozzar, R.A., Allen, N.A., Stamp, K.D., & Sampson, D.A. (2013). Focusing on feedback: how nurse practitioners can use focus group interviews to build a patient-centered practice. *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, 26(9), 481-487. DOI: 10.1002/2327-6924.12065.
- [4] Ryan, K.E., Gandha, T., Culbertson M.J., & Carlson C. (2013). Focus group evidence: implications for design and analysis. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 35(3), 328-345. DOI: 10.1177/1098214013508300.

How to Conduct a Focus Group

1. Establish goals and objectives.
2. Draft and finalize questions (e.g., question standardization, number of questions).
3. Decide on a budget (e.g., incentives for participation, meeting space).
4. Determine where and when to conduct the focus group(s).
5. Establish and define participant eligibility requirements.
6. Outline the recruitment process (e.g., generate a pool of names meeting eligibility, randomize names to reduce bias).
7. Decide on a desired number of focus groups and assign a set number of participants per group.
8. Assign a moderator and notetaker.
9. Prepare the moderator guide, which includes the focus group questions.
10. Submit for Internal Review Board (IRB) approval, if applicable.
11. Recruit participants.
12. Meet with participants to conduct the focus group.
13. Analyze the data.
14. Disseminate the results.