

Engaging Voices: A Community Driven Approach to Assessments

A Guide to Data Analysis for Sexual Assault
Response Teams

by

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This resource was adapted from *Listening to Our Communities: A Guide on Data Analysis*, originally created by the National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center in 2014. The Sexual Violence Justice Institute customized this adaptation with examples and information specifically relevant to Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs).



Building Stronger Response Through Data

Effective evaluation is vital for Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs). It helps them:

- Understand their impact
- Strengthen collaborative practices
- Ensure victims/survivors receive the best possible response to sexual violence

This guide offers a comprehensive overview of data analysis tailored to the needs of SARTs.

Through this resource, team members will:

- Learn foundational principles of data analysis
- Apply analysis techniques to their own settings
- Use findings to inform decision-making and improve outcomes

What is Data Analysis?

We conduct data analysis daily. Imagine you go to the grocery store, and you come home with fruits, vegetables, and snacks. To organize them, you separate them into different categories. This is like data analysis, where you sort and categorize data to make it easier to understand.

Data analysis is essentially the process of looking for patterns, making sense of information, and using that understanding to make decisions. Just like in everyday life, it helps simplify complex information to guide better choices.

How to Complete the Data Analysis Process

Describing your process of data analysis requires clarity, sensitivity, and adherence to ethical and safety considerations.

A structured approach to outlining this process could be as follows:

Step 1: Define Your Question

- **Purpose**
Define the main goal of the analysis, such as understanding trends in sexual assault cases, evaluating the effectiveness of the SART response protocols, or identifying areas for improvement for a specific population.
- **Objectives**
Clearly outline specific objectives like improving response times, increasing conviction rates, or enhancing victims'/survivors' satisfaction.

Step 2: Data Collection

- **Strategies for Data Collection**

Identify the data sources you are using or how you will determine which data you need, such as police reports, medical records, interviews, or written surveys with victims/survivors, and the reasons for choosing these sources.

- **Ethical Considerations**

Highlight how you ensured confidentiality, obtained informed consent, and handled sensitive information, particularly regarding victim/survivor data.

Step 3: Data Preparation

- **Identify Who Will Prepare the Data**

You will first need to identify who will be preparing the data. These may be members of the SART team or an external partner you contract with such as an academic researcher at a local university.

- **Data Transcription**

If your data sources were interviews or focus groups, where there was a lot of conversation and information received, it may be helpful to transcribe what was said. This can be done by recording the audio of the session and note-taking during the session, ensuring you first have the consent of participants before recording. It is important to keep information in aggregate rather than tied to a specific person. This will ensure the anonymity of the participants.

After the recording is complete, listen to the recording and start transcribing, typing exactly what was said. It may be helpful to read through the transcript multiple times to get a deep understanding. If you are using virtual platforms, such as Zoom, automated transcription options are available.

For focus group support, please refer to [Engaging Voices: A Community Drive Approach to Assessments - A Guide to Focus Groups](#).

- **Data Cleaning**

Take steps to clean the data, such as removing duplicates, misspellings, missing data, or correcting inconsistencies. If there are any parts of the recording that are unclear, make note of it, and if possible, clarify with the participants afterward.

- **Code the Data**

Break down the data into more manageable, distinct parts to identify any commonalities or patterns. As you read through the data, it can be helpful to write down key words of what was said. These key words will become your labels or codes. You can also group codes together, so they are organized in some sort of logical way. The chart below has some examples of how you can organize codes. You will need to identify your own codes based on the data you are analyzing.

Examples of Organized Codes

Positive	Negative
Helpful	Not Helpful
Support	Felt Alone
No Blame	Anger
Available Resources	Lack of Resources

You may find that halfway through analyzing the data you discover a new code. No problem! Make note of the code and go back through the initial data with that code in mind.

- **Organize the Data**

It is likely you will end up with many different codes. Once you are done analyzing, you may want to go back through and clean up or organize the data codes, combining any codes that are similar. Make sure to combine all data with the same code into one place.

You can do this in the following ways:

- Using MS Word to copy/paste passages into lists or tables.
- Using MS Excel to copy/paste passages into a spreadsheet where every column represents a different label.
- Writing passages on color-coded sticky notes or index cards and grouping them together.
- Using a Poster Board to visualize and make sense of your findings using sticky notes, markers, and any other supplies you might need.

Step 4: Interpretation and Analysis

- **Identify Themes**

Look at your findings and see what sticks out. What labels or codes have lots of passages? What are the overarching ideas? It can be helpful to create a visual representation, like maps or diagrams, to see how the themes interrelate.

- **Validate Themes**

If possible, have colleagues or other team members review your themes to ensure they make sense and are not biased.

- **Summarize Findings**

Summarize how the data was interpreted, ensuring that the findings are presented in a way that is respectful and avoids re-traumatizing victims/survivors.

- **Use Examples**

Use quotes or specific pieces of data to illustrate or support each theme, making your analysis more compelling and engaging.

- **Further Information Needed**

There may be times when you have more questions than answers based on your data analysis results. It may be helpful to ask your participants to come back together to fill in those missing gaps or to provide further clarification if needed.

Step 5: Sharing Your Results

- **Report Your Findings**

Outline the format for how you will present your results, including how results will be communicated to different stakeholders (e.g., visualizations, formal/detailed report, resource handout, etc.).

- **Actionable Recommendations**

Based on the analysis, provide recommendations that can help improve the SART's effectiveness such as training programs, policy and procedures, or resource allocation.

Example of Coding

A focus group was conducted with eight victims/survivors of sexual violence. The discussion aimed to explore their experiences with the criminal legal system, the support they received from various community service agencies, and their emotional recovery process. The conversation was recorded, transcribed, and now needs to be coded to extract meaningful insight.

Transcription

Participant 1: "When I reported the assault, the police were very dismissive. It felt like they didn't believe me."

Participant 2: "The legal process was overwhelming and made me feel re-traumatized."

Participant 3: "I found great support from a local advocacy shelter. They really helped me to heal."

Participant 4: "I should have known better than to meet a blind date at a hotel. I didn't want to tell anyone what happened because I felt stupid."

Initial Coding

- **Code 1: "Police Response"**

Example:

- Participant 1: "When I reported the assault, the police were very dismissive. It felt like they didn't believe me."

- **Code 2: "Legal System Challenges"**

Example:

- Participant 2: "The legal process was overwhelming and made me feel re-traumatized. I didn't know where to even start."

- **Code 3: "Support Services"**

Example:

- Participant 3: "I found great support from a local advocacy shelter. They really helped me to heal."

- **Code 4: "Shame and Self-Blame"**

Example:

- Participant 4: "I should have known better than to meet a blind date at a hotel. I didn't want to tell anyone what happened because I felt stupid."

Focused Coding

After initial coding, you might start grouping similar codes together and refining them based on identified patterns.

- **Theme 1: “Negative Interactions with Authorities”**
Code: “Police Response”
Code: “Legal System Challenges”
- **Theme 2: “Positive Support Networks”**
Code: “Support Services”
Code: “Emotional Recovery”
- **Theme 3: “Emotional and Psychological Impact”**
Code: “Shame and Self-Blame”

Summary of Themes

- **Theme 1: “Negative Interactions with Authorities”**
Many participants expressed feeling dismissed or disbelieved by the police, which intensified their trauma. The legal process was described as re-traumatizing, suggesting a need for trauma-informed approaches within the criminal justice system.
- **Theme 2: “Positive Support Networks”**
Participants highlighted the crucial role of community-based support services, such as shelter and counseling, in their journey to healing. These services were seen as more empathetic and understanding compared to the formal criminal justice legal system.
- **Theme 3: “Emotional and Psychological Impact”**
Participants discussed feelings of shame or blaming themselves for the assault. The shame and self-blame was heightened by societal messages that unfairly place blame on victims/survivors rather than the perpetrator.

Final Analysis

The themes identified can now be analyzed in relation to the research questions. For example, if the research aimed to support systems for sexual violence victims/survivors, the themes “Negative Interactions with Authorities” and “Positive Support Networks” provide insights into where improvements are needed and what is working well.

Turning Insight Into Action

Effective data analysis is a critical component for SARTs to evaluate impact, identify gaps in services, and improve responses to sexual violence. By systematically analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data, SARTs can uncover valuable insights into the experiences and needs of victims/survivors in the community, enhance coordinated responses, and

For more information or guidance, please contact us at svji@mncasa.org or visit www.mncasa.org for more on our victim/survivor-centered work with Sexual Assault Response Teams.

This publication was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW- 22-GK-04025-MUMU awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice.