Your Data …Your Story
Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health
A project of the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative

www.childhealthdata.org

Making National Survey Data Come Alive

Communication of data is essential to engaging all audiences, including those involved in research, program development, program evaluation, and policy making. When used effectively, data on children's health can be a powerful tool to educate stakeholders, inform decision makers, and motivate and track improvement of children's health care delivery. However, accomplishing these goals requires strategic communication of data results. For many stakeholders, data can be overwhelming and can lead to a lack of engagement or tuning out. To make data come alive, communicate data to your audience by grounding data in real life, easy to understand examples and scenarios.

Making Data Come Alive in four easy steps!
Step 1: Select a relevant data point to your research, program or policy.
Step 2: Frame your message.
Step 3: Translate the data point into a meaningful concept.
Step 4: Present your findings to your audience.

STEP 1: Select a relevant data point to your research, program, or policy. For data on children's health, you can begin an interactive data search on children or children with special health care needs by going to: (http://childhealthdata.org/browse/survey).

How many children have special health care needs? (details)

		Non-CSHCN	CSHCN	Total %
California	%	89.4	10.6	100.0
	C.I.	(88.6 - 90.3)	(9.7 - 11.4)	
	n	9,114	1,168	
	Pop. Est.	8,422,276	997,157	
Nationwide	%	84.9	15.1	100.0
	C.I.	(84.7 - 85.2)	(14.8 - 15.3)	
	n	311,676	59,941	
	Pop. Est.	63,134,959	11,203,616	

C.I. = 95% Confidence Interval. Percentages are weighted to population characteristics.
n = Cell size. Use caution in interpreting Cell sizes less than 50.

❖ For this exercise, we selected the 2009 NS-CSHCN to examine the prevalence of children with special health care needs (e.g. the number of children who experience at least one ongoing health condition which results in an above routine use of health services) in California.

❖ In California, there are an estimated **997,000** children with special health care needs.

STEP 2: Frame your message. Consider your audience. What point do you want to get across? How can you communicate this in a clear and concise way, with relevance to a broad audience?

For example, select a reference point with common cultural understanding among your community of interest. Examples include the size of a local sports arena, distances between common sites, or how many children would fill city school buses. To increase overall impact, this should include a tangible idea that catches the reader based on interest and geographical area.

❖ To illustrate this point we will use the distance school buses would stretch if they were full of children with special health care needs from California. Note that you can use this example for a specific health outcome or consequence (such as children with asthma, or children without a medical home).

NOTE: The average school bus is 40 feet in length and holds 55 children (discovered via a quick Google search)

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STEP 3: Calculate the data point into the chosen meaningful concept.

Calculate the number of miles school buses would stretch across California. In our example, there are approximately **997,000** children with special health care needs in California.

Number of Miles of School Buses

This would equate to $\dfrac{997,000 \text{ kids}}{1} \times \dfrac{1 \text{ Bus}}{40 \text{ kids}} \times \dfrac{55 \text{ feet}}{1 \text{ Bus}} \times \dfrac{1 \text{ mile}}{5280 \text{ feet}} = 259.6 \text{ miles}$

> **Since our population is CSHCN in California, we would look for a distance roughly equal to 260 miles in California (e.g. Santa Barbara to San Diego). The goal is to find something that will grab people's attention.**

STEP 4: Present your findings to your audience.

Simplicity is essential! Find a way to discuss your data in the most concise way possible. Consider using a graphic or picture, but only if it brings more clarity to your point and does not distract the audience. Making a simple, concise point will speak volumes about the needs of your specific population.

> ❖ **All of the CSHCN in California would fill 24,925 school buses and stretch the entire distance from San Diego to Santa Barbara (259.6 miles).**

Another example
❖ 2.7 million CSHCN have parents who cut back and/or stopped working due to their child's condition. This is equivalent to the number of people who work for the US Federal Government.

DRC
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For more information on Children and CSHCN, please visit the Data Resource Center (DRC) for Child and Adolescent Health at www.childhealthdata.org.

Another example
❖ 11.2 million children in the U.S. have special health care needs. This would fill 280,000 school buses and stretch 2,917 miles—greater than the distance from Los Angeles, CA to New York, NY!